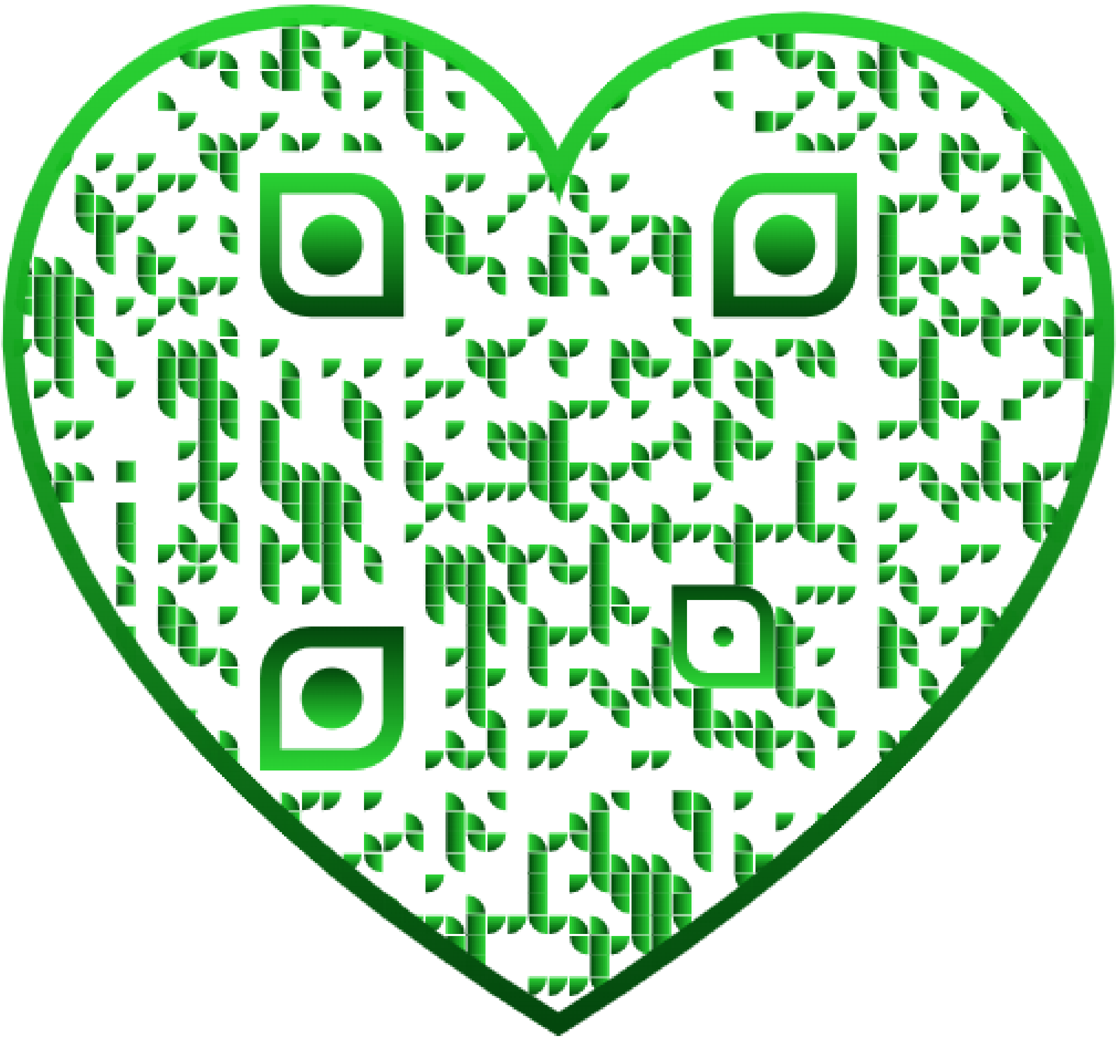
50TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTOR'S EDITION

CLASSIC ROCK

AC/DC

FUTURE
ISSUE 329



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CLASSIC ROCK
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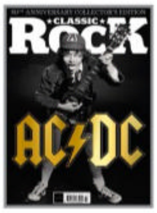
When news broke in early February that AC/DC were returning to the road, there were scenes of great joy in the *Classic Rock* office. I'm pretty sure I've mentioned in this space before that of all the bands that the editorial team love, it's quite possibly only AC/DC that unites us all! Ahead of their imminent arrival in the UK, we sent Dave Everley to Germany to catch the fervour of the opening night of their tour (p32), and Paul Elliott spoke with rock luminaries Joe Perry, Gene Simmons and Francis Rossi to try to get to the heart of what makes Angus and co. tick and how AC/DC manage to keep their rock'n'roll train rolling.

Also in this issue, Ann and Nancy Wilson of Heart sit down with us for the Classic Rock Interview (p36), we look back at the making of classic Allman Brothers live album *At Fillmore East* (p56), catch up with Joe Bonamassa and Glenn Hughes as they reunite Black Country Communion (p44), chat with Ian Hunter about his celebrity encounters (p50), and so much more. Until next month...

Siân Llewellyn, Editor



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This month's contributors

PAUL ELLIOTT
This month, Paul has written about the return of AC/DC with their long-awaited tour (p22), and gives thanks to those who gave up their time to discuss the longevity and arse-kicking genius of the greatest rock'n'roll band of them all: Gene Simmons, Francis Rossi and Joe Perry. As a boy, Paul was a member of the AC/DC fan club, and to this day he still maintains that *Back In Black* is the greatest album of all time.

JERRY EWING
Prog editor Jerry has been bothering people about prog rock since the early 80s, when as a teenager he founded the fanzine *Court Jester*. The more impressive *Classic Rock* and *Prog* magazines followed. This month he's returned to the pages of *Classic Rock* to wax, er, progressively about the discography of Emerson, Lake & Palmer for this issue's Buyer's Guide (p88)

POLLY GLASS
Our deputy editor marked her tenth year as a *Classic Rock* staffer (10 years! How the fuck did that happen?!) by sitting down with Joe Bonamassa in London, and Glenn Hughes over the phone from Nassau, to get the lowdown on Black Country Communion's return (p44). She also interviewed The Lemon Twigs (p54) and wrote this month's Hot List (64). Something old, something new...

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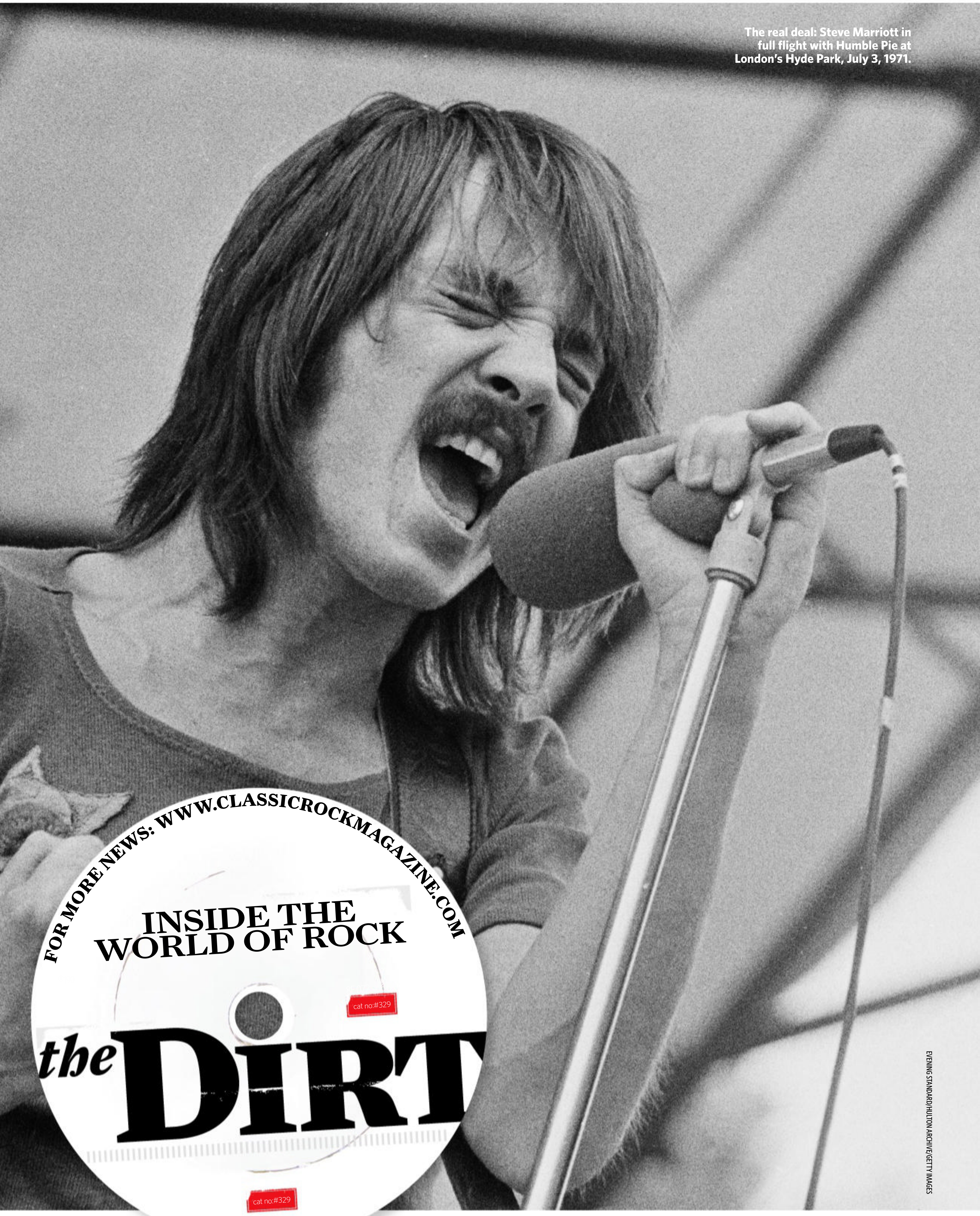

The real deal: Steve Marriott in full flight with Humble Pie at London's Hyde Park, July 3, 1971.

EVENING STANDARD/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

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INSIDE THE WORLD OF ROCK

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Steve Marriott AI Plans Spark Fury

Stars, bandmates and family rally against 'new' tracks being released.

Peter Frampton and Jerry Shirley have spoken to *Classic Rock* as the heated debate over AI-generated vocals took its latest twist. Singer/guitarist Frampton and drummer Shirley are among a growing list of celebrated musicians objecting to plans by the estate of the pair's late Humble Pie colleague, frontman Steve Marriott, to release so-called 'new' recordings from the singer, who died in 1991 at the age of 44.

Those registering their objection include Marriott's singing daughter Mollie and her siblings Lesley, Toby and Tonya, Steve's former Small Faces bandmate Kenny Jones, plus Robert Plant, David Gilmour, Paul Rodgers, Bryan Adams, Glenn Hughes and Paul Weller.

Los Angeles-based independent label Cleopatra Records have been in discussions with the Marriott estate about completing some of Steve's unfinished demos using AI technology, although they plan to release the recordings in their original form "for now" – those two words being crucial – via three as-yet-unscheduled compilation albums. Chris France, the managing director of Marriott's estate, told *Variety* that while "there are no confirmed plans to use Steve Marriott's voice on AI recordings, that does not mean a deal will not be done with one of several suitors who have made offers".

When Mollie Marriott voiced her objection in the strongest terms, France responded: "I am afraid that [Mollie's] opinions are of no consequence to me or Steve's estate."

As the current owner of the band name, Jerry Shirley has liaised many times with Cleopatra and France over previous Humble Pie re-release projects. Six months ago, Shirley received a proposal to include future AI amendments in their deal. The drummer knew right away that this was a non-starter but, in the interests of exploring all possibilities Shirley invited Cleopatra to apply the technique to the Ray Charles-populated classic song *Georgia On My Mind*. "I only asked them because I knew it couldn't be done, but I was curious," he explains. "I also knew that song with Steve singing it doesn't exist on tape."

Shirley was utterly dismayed by the results. "It was horrible – not even close," he reveals.

Unperturbed, technicians tried again. "Second time around it was even worse," Shirley says. "There were slight improvements in the backing track – I've no idea who played on those, by the way – but it sounded like a half-decent white soul singer trying to sound like a white soul singer trying to sound like Steve Marriott – and failing. It didn't sound anything like Steve."

Shirley chose not to be involved. "I felt so strongly that in doing so I turned down twenty thousand dollars."

Awareness of AI in music has boomed since last year when the new technology was used to create the 'new' Beatles song *Now And Then*. The unexpected bonus of a previously non-existent song from the Fab Four helped to normalise the process. But Shirley believes the circumstances surrounding the Marriott songs to be completely different.

"The Beatles song was made with the original demo, using John Lennon's voice and building the backing track around it by the surviving members of the band. And it was done with the permission of John's family," he points out.

Frampton, for his part, is yet to hear the version of *Georgia On My Mind*, "so I don't know how bad it is," he tells *Classic Rock*. "But for Jerry to say what he did it must be *really* bad." He also shares Shirley's defence of *Now And Then*, "and that's because Paul McCartney knew how John Lennon sang", he reasons.

Frampton's concerns were raised when he was emailed an AI-sourced reboot of *Baby, I Love Your Way*, his own hit from 1975, sung in the voice of John Lennon.

> **"Using somebody's immortal voice for anything other than its original purpose is just wrong."**
>
> **Peter Frampton**

"This was the version from my acoustic album [*Acoustic Classics*, 2016]," he explains. "John never used much vibrato at the end of a line, and I do. It was pretty good actually, and I found that kinda freaky. It scared me to death."

For Frampton, it raised some significant red flags. "If they [AI technicians] can do it to Steve and they've done it to me, what comes next? How far will they go?" he wonders. "For me there is no place for such fakery. Using somebody's immortal voice for anything other than its original purpose is just wrong.

"Here in America, Congress is working against AI, and I have signed on to be a part of that," Frampton continues. "The process can also be used to compose songs and write literature. Now AI can generate a thesis on any subject you like: 'Write me a thesis in the style of Shakespeare.' It's plagiarism by any other name. A piece of work should be the personal property of the artist."

When *Classic Rock* approached Cleopatra Records to comment, CEO Brian Perera explained that the company was pushing on with releasing Marriott's demos in their existing form, with no AI manipulation. The label are also weighing up repeating the blueprint for the recent album from Cactus, on which drummer Carmine Appice is joined by guests including Ted Nugent, Joe Bonamassa, Pat Travers and Dug Pinnick from King's X. According to Perera, Appice is "enthusiastic about supporting a venture that could reintroduce Marriott's voice to a broader audience".

Cleopatra are also preparing an album of unfinished demos by the late Stiv Bators, the much-loved Lords Of The New Church frontman who passed away in 1990, with a current-day cast that includes Blondie drummer Clem Burke, Glen Matlock from the Sex Pistols, and James Williamson of The Stooges.

Keen to emphasise his point, Perera added: "I remain optimistic about the potential of AI in music. Just as remixing tracks for the EDM scene and sampling in hip-hop have revitalised dormant pieces, AI has the power to celebrate and perpetuate musical legacies in a respectful and innovative way."

So what message would Frampton and Shirley like to send to the gatekeepers of the Steve Marriott estate, who are so intent to ride roughshod over his daughter Mollie's wishes?

"It's not just Mollie's feelings, we are talking about the rights of just about every musician and singer on the planet," Frampton exclaims. "All of us should be aware of this. I'm very glad that Robert Plant, Paul Rodgers and all these other great musicians are standing up for the cause. We are really mad about this. If I have to go to Congress here to stop it in America, we will get as many artists as possible and we will do that."

"Why are [the Marriott Estate] considering potentially taking the reputation of arguably the best white blues singer of our generation to come out of England and completely ruining it," Shirley fumes.

"The simulation of somebody's talent is abhorrent to me," says Frampton.

"I will do all I can to prevent what's being proposed," Shirley continues. "I saw a quote from a fan on the internet that, for me, summed up the situation: 'AI, by definition, has no soul. Steve Marriott was *pure* soul.'"

An exasperated Robert Plant commented: "This is a far cry from what any of us dreamt of when we set off into this wonderful world of music. We just can't stand by and watch this unfold." **DL**

This month The Dirt was compiled by Paul Brannigan, Jerry Ewing, Gary Graff, Jo Kendall, Stef Lach, Fraser Lewry, Dave Ling, Matt Mills, Will Simpson,

RIP

Thank you... and good night.

John Barbata
April 1, 1945 – May 8, 2024

Former Jefferson Starship and Jefferson Airplane drummer John Barbata has died of unknown cause, aged 79. Barbata also played with Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, The Turtles, Linda Ronstadt, Ry Cooder and others, and had an estimated 60 uncredited appearances on albums. Barbata once said: "I was very fortunate, most drummers only go around once. I went around three times and played with the best musicians in the world."

David Sanborn
July 30, 1945 – May 12, 2024

Florida-born David Sanborn became a go-to alto saxophonist for artists including Stevie Wonder, David Bowie, the Rolling Stones, Roger Waters, Eric Clapton, Elton John, and Carly Simon, earning him six Grammys. A statement from Sanborn's publicist said his he "put the saxophone back into rock'n'roll". Sanborne was 78 and had been battling prostate cancer.

John Hawken
May 9, 1940 – May 15, 2024

A native of Bournemouth, John Hawken was best known as a keyboard player for the Nashville Teens, Renaissance and Strawbs. He also played with Spooky Tooth, Illusion, Vinegar Joe and Third World War, as well as having a solo career. Hawken died from melanoma six days after celebrating his 84th birthday. He had retired from touring in 2008 but 11 years later joined Strawbs for their 50th-anniversary show.

Charlie Colin
November 22, 1966 – May 17, 2024

Charlie Colin, a founding member of US pop-rockers Train, has died at the age of 58 after a fall in the shower. He was a big part of Train's early success, performing on their 2001 smash hit *Drops Of Jupiter*. A statement from Train described Colin as "the sweetest guy, and what a handsome chap".

Jon Wysocki
Died May 18, 2024

Founding Staind drummer Jon Wysocki has died at the age of 53. He had been receiving medical attention for issues with his liver. Wysocki played on seven of Staind's eight albums before leaving in 2011. "Jon was integral to who we were as a band," said a statement. "The 17 years that followed were some of the best memories of our times together."

Doug Ingle

September 9, 1945 – May 24, 2024

The last surviving original member of American psychedelic rockers Iron Butterfly has died at 78. Doug Ingle was the band's lead singer, primary songwriter and organist.

Ingle was born in Omaha, Nebraska, and moved to California as a child. His interest music came from his father who was a church organist. He founded Iron Butterfly in 1966, and their debut album *Heavy* was released two years later.

The San Diego-based band were hugely influential and are ranked among the founding fathers of American heavy rock. They were best known for their 17-minute classic *In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida*, the title track from their second album, which Ingle co-wrote and sang on. The album achieved quadruple-platinum sales in the US.

The track came from a studio sound-check at which the band largely jammed and improvised. It was supposed to be titled In The Garden Of Eden, but when Ingle sang it to drummer Ron Bushy he was out of it and mis-heard it as 'In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida'.

It was edited to under three minutes and released as a single, but the album version became a beloved classic, and famously made an appearance in *The Simpsons*. A Tweet from the animated TV show said: "RIP Doug Ingle. We'll always have your rock and or roll." **SL/DL**

Richard Tandy

March 26, 1948 – May 1, 2024

Electric Light Orchestra keyboard player Richard Tandy has died aged 76. Tandy was notably the only member of the band who was in all three incarnations of the band as well as leader Jeff Lynne.

In a statement, Lynne said: "It is with great sadness that I share the news of the passing of my long-time collaborator and dear friend Richard Tandy. He was a remarkable musician and friend and I'll cherish the lifetime of memories we had together. Sending all my love to Sheila and the Tandy family."

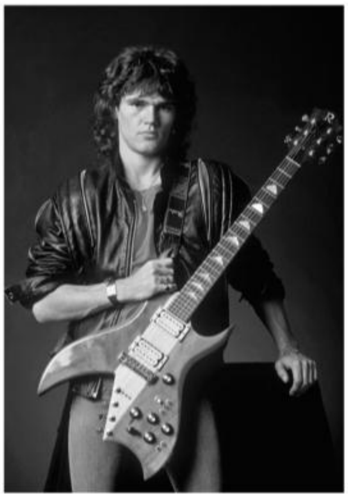
Tandy was born in Birmingham. At school he met future Move and ELO drummer Bev Bevan, and later played harpsichord on The Move's 1968 No.1 *Blackberry Way*, and filled in on bass for a short time.

He joined ELO in 1971, and remained until Lynne disbanded the group in 1986. He was in the band for the short-lived 2000-2001 re-formation from – the only member from the band's earlier incarnation to do so – and again when Lynne resurrected the band, with no other former members, for their most recent run of success in 2014.

Outside of ELO, Tandy formed the Tandy Morgan Band with fellow Birmingham musician Dave Morgan (who had played with Magnum) and released the concept album *Earthrise* in 1985. **JE**

Robin George

Died April 26, 2024



British guitarist, singer, songwriter and producer Robin George has died of unknown cause at the age of 68.

Born in Wolverhampton in 1956, George had a minor hit with *Heartline*, a song from his album *Dangerous Music*, in 1985. He also worked with a variety of big names in rock, including Philip Lynott, Uriah Heep's David Byron in The Byron Band, Glenn Hughes and Magnum, who he toured with as a rhythm guitarist on a trek for *The Eleventh Hour!* in 1983. George also wrote *Red For Danger* with Robert Plant, a song that appears on Plant's *Sixty-Six To Timbuktu* compilation.

George was also a member of Notorious, with former Diamond Head singer Sean Harris, and Damage Control, with ex-UFO bassist Pete Way, Quireboys frontman Spike and Chris Slade.

He also worked as a producer, overseeing releases from Diamond Head, Wrathchild (UK), Witchfinder General and Quartz. His last album, *Wilderness*, was released in 2021.

"Robin had been fighting a long illness, but by Christmas it became obvious that he was not long for this world," said a statement on his Facebook page. "He desperately wanted his music to live on because music was in his heart and soul. We hope he's partying with the family, friends and musicians he loved and lost over the years." **DL**

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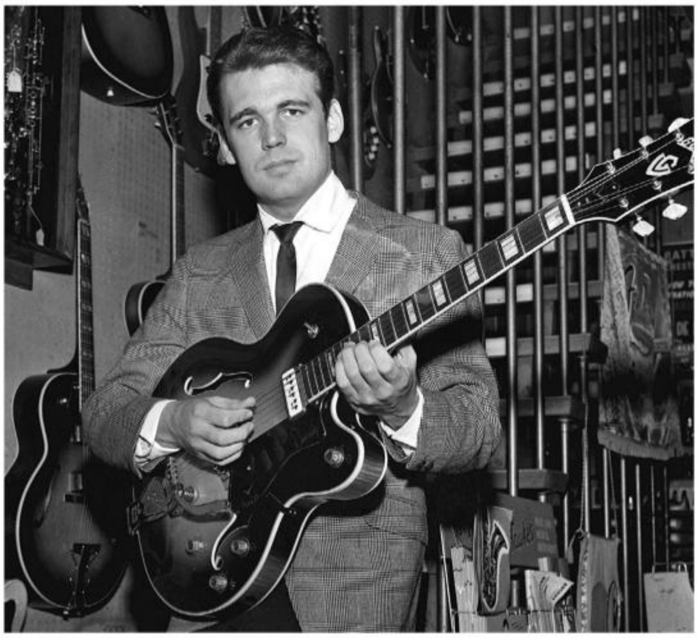


Duane Eddy

April 26, 1938 – April 30, 2024

Jimmy Page has led the tributes to Duane Eddy, the pioneer of instrumental guitar rock who was best known for his 1959 hit *Peter Gunn*, after the 86-year-old lost his battle with cancer.

"I am sad to hear of the passing of Duane Eddy," said a social media post from Page. "I first saw him perform at the Granada in Kingston in November 1963 and topping the bill that evening was Gene Vincent."

It added: "Duane Eddy twanged the thang in the late 1950s and 60s, and you can hear his character sound appearing throughout the decades of popular music. He will be missed and my thoughts are with his family. He was such a lovely man."

Eddy was born in New York in 1938 and picked up the guitar at a young age. As a teenager he devised a technique of playing lead parts on the low strings of the instrument, creating the 'twangy' sound for which he'd become famous. His band used route-one melodies, adding rasping horns and a guitar tone like a motorbike engine, and the classic early singles *Rebel Rouser* and *Peter Gunn* prompted many future stars, including Brian May, Bruce Springsteen, Mark Knopfler and Foreigner's Mick Jones, to pick up the guitar.

Eddy's most recent album was 2011's acclaimed *Road Trip*, a collaboration with former Pulp guitarist and singer/songwriter Richard Hawley. The pair performed together in London and Manchester in 2018 to celebrate Eddy's eightieth birthday. **FL**

Steve Albini

July 22, 1962 – May 7, 2024

Steve Albini, one of the best-known personalities in US underground rock, frontman of Shellac and the recording engineer on iconic albums by Nirvana, Pixies, PJ Harvey and more, has died of a heart attack, aged 61.

Californian Albini formed Big Black in 1981, and they became one of the most influential, hard-hitting acts in US alt. rock. Their 80s studio albums *Atomizer* and *Songs About Fucking* are both regarded as alt.rock masterpieces.

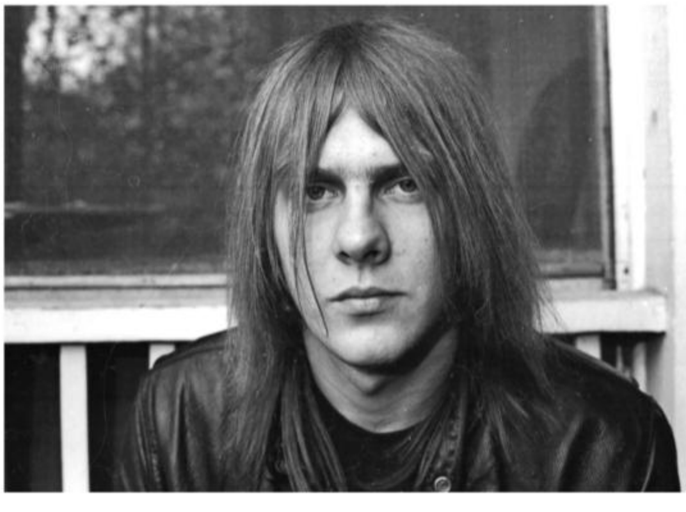
After Big Black split in 1987, Albini formed the shamefully named Rapeman, titled after an extreme Japanese manga comic. Having already worked with Pixies, Slint, Urge Overkill and more in the late 80s, between Rapeman's dissolution in 1989 and the formation of Shellac in 1992, Albini recorded albums for the Jesus Lizard, Tar, The Breeders, Pussy Galore and Tad, among others.

Albini, who refused to accept the term 'producer', seeing his role as being that of a sound engineer, also collaborated with acts as diverse as Mogwai, The Frames, The Stooges, Jarvis Cocker, Code Orange and Neurosis, and worked on Jimmy Page and Robert Plant's 1997 album *Walking Into Clarksdale*. Page said: "Steve had an impressive CV and he leaves a real legacy."

"I wouldn't be the person I am now without Steve Albini," said Ginger Wildheart. "Big Black were, and remain, huge for me." **PB/DL**

Dennis 'Machine Gun' Thompson

September 7, 1948 – May 9, 2024



The last remaining original member of the MC5 has died at the age of 75 after a series of medical issues. The news comes three months after the death of fellow MC5 founder, guitarist Wayne Kramer, and a month after the death of band manager John Sinclair.

Thompson was born Dennis Tomich in Highland Park, Michigan. After playing on all three MC5 albums he hooked up with Stooges guitarist Ron Ashton in the LA-based supergroup The New Order, whose sole, self-titled album was released in 1977. Thompson and Ashton then went on to form New Race, but the band never released a studio album.

More recently, Thompson hooked up with original MC5 members Wayne Kramer and bassist Michael Davis to tour as DKT/MC5in 2004 (Davis died in 2012), and in 2022 it was confirmed that he'd played on two tracks on a projected fourth album under the MC5 banner, *Heavy Lifting*. The album was produced by Bob Ezrin, and musicians on it included Slash, Tom Morello, Living Colour's Vernon Reid, Alice In Chains frontman William DuVall, Don Was, Kesha and Jill Sobule. Originally given a release date of October 2022, it has yet to surface.

The MC5's induction into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame was finally confirmed last month, and, according to Becky Tyner, widow of MC5 frontman Rob Tyner (died 1991), Thompson was delighted. "It's about fucking time!", she reported him saying. **FL**

DUANE EDDY: ASHURST/MIRRORPIX/GETTY; STEVE ALBINI: BRIAN CASSELLA/GETTY; DENNIS THOMPSON: LENI SINCLAIR/GETTY

New GN'R Album Begun

Slash says the band are "trying" to make a new record.

Slash has revealed that Guns N' Roses are planning to record a new album – their first since 2008's *Chinese Democracy*. The band's seventh album, it will be the first to feature Slash on guitar since the covers set *The Spaghetti Incident?* in 1993.

Speaking to the *Daily Star* about his new solo album *Orgy Of The Damned*, Slash was asked why none of his GN'R bandmates or any of his collaborators from Slash Featuring Myles Kennedy & The Conspirators project are on the new record, which is mostly a set of blues songs made with guest vocalists and musicians. Slash let slip that GN'R are "trying" to make a new album, adding: "[This] was my own side thing, so I wasn't dragging my own guys in. Guns N' Roses are trying to make their own record and I'm working with them in that capacity, but this didn't involve anyone else." **SL/DL**

Guns N' Roses: new material being worked on.

One More Sabbath Show?

Ozzy, Iommi and Butler want to play a farewell with Ward.

Tony Iommi and Geezer Butler have joined former Black Sabbath bandmate Ozzy Osbourne in expressing a desire for one last show along with original drummer Bill Ward. Ozzy had begun the debate when asked in an interview if he was happy with Sabbath's career, to which he replied: "No, because it wasn't Black Sabbath that finished it. It's unfinished. If they wanted to do one more gig with Bill, I would jump at the chance."

Iommi said the proposal was "a nice idea", but added: "You're gonna get everybody going: 'Oh, they're doing it for the money', they're doing it for this, they're doing it for that. Well it wouldn't be. It'd be something that'd be a nice thing to actually do, but whether it happens will be another thing. But we'll see. I mean, who knows?"

"Of course there's an interest [on my part to do it]," Butler told interviewer Eddie Trunk, "but there's a big 'but' – you'd have to speak to Bill about it. Everybody wants to do it [but I don't know if Ward is] capable [of pulling it off]." **SL/MM**

NEWS

A crowdfunding campaign has been launched to support the recovery of **Jeff 'Mantas' Dunne**. The former Venom and current Venom Inc guitarist, 63, is currently recuperating at home in Portugal after a heart attack.

Swedish pop-rockers **Roxette** have reunited, with singer Lena Philipsson in place of Marie Fredriksson, who succumbed to cancer five years ago. "Marie will always be irreplaceable," says guitarist, vocalist and songwriter Per Gessle. "However, I'm lucky to have found an amazing voice and a brilliant performer in Lena."

The Quireboys release a new album, *Wardour Street*, on September 13 via Cadiz Music. The Spike-led version of the band includes Thunder's Luke Morley on guitar.

Joe Elliott has "an issue with the term heavy metal", which he describes as "silly". In fact, Def Leppard's frontman doesn't think his band fall into the heavy metal category at all. "Everybody outside of rock always thinks if you're a heavy metal band, it's like bad news," Elliott says. "You get this impression that everybody's a moron."

Alex Lifeson and **Geddy Lee** (pictured) appeared on stage together recently at Massey Hall in Toronto as part of a tribute show for their fellow Canadian musician Gordon Lightfoot, who died last year. Rush's live album *All The World's A Stage* was recorded at the same venue back in 1976.

WELCOME BACK

Anvil

Their career a master class in perseverance, the Canadian band return with studio album number 20.

Perhaps more widely known these days for the 2008 'rockumentary' *Anvil! The Story Of Anvil* than for their music, the enduring Canadian metallers are poised to release their latest album *One And Only* at the end of June. Its title is a perfect description for these singular metal warriors. Talking to *Classic Rock* from his home in Toronto, Steven 'Lips' Ludlow, the band's seemingly never-ageing frontman, is sipping decaf coffee "to stop my heart from defibrillating", he says, laughing.

Anvil are now twenty albums into their five-decade career, with a short break for the pandemic.
We had some music released before, during and after the pandemic [laughs]. I put stuff together every day. It's my rule to sit down and create, no matter what. Then Robb [Reiner, drummer] will throw me a bunch of titles, and they're my hooks to find music and lyrics that fit. We had times when we didn't plan and it became a real clusterfuck, if you pardon my expression. But when I wrote *March Of The Crabs* [on 1982's *Metal On Metal*] I had it all worked out. That was the way forward.

> "We do things differently, that's what makes us one and only."

There's a bit of soul singer Wilson Pickett in the title track, *One And Only*.
I'm shocked that you recognised it! But rhythm and blues is where rock started, so thought I'd add the 'bah buppa baaah' melody. We do things differently, that's what makes us one and only.

Politics and the music business have made it into the lyrics.
I write about my environment, so *World Of Fools* is political and *Truth Is Dying* is about misinformation. *Fight For Your Rights* – I wanted to reflect on the battles we'll never win now, and the time when we were so desperate for a deal that we signed away our rights to the first three records *for ever*.

But *Rocking The World* is about the fans?
The real gold for Anvil is the fans and the friends you make along the way. It's not the money at all, it's the experience.

Did the vibrator make it into the studio for a guitar solo?
Not on this album. But it's still in the live show. That's part of the 'one and only' thing, and my personality. I'll do things that no one else wants to do or would do [laughs].

The documentary *Anvil! The Story Of Anvil* has been remastered and re-released. What's new in this version of it?
There's a one-hour interview where we talk about everything that happened as a result of the movie. Since it came out in 2008 we have a whole new audience. *Anvil!* will speak to generations to come. It's not so much about the music, but about not giving up, going after your dreams.

The film speaks to celebrity fans, too.
Oh, man! Some of the Hollywood people I got to know, like, why is a rock guy friends with Dustin Hoffman? Imagine your phone rings and it's Anthony Hopkins? And then you go to an award show and Paul McCartney, my lifetime idol, knows who I am! I'm getting a second heyday. What a way to fucking retire, *into* rock'n'roll! I could put all the horrible jobs behind me to travel the world and have a party every night. I can honestly say I got everything I ever wanted, finally, out of the music business. **JK**

One And Only is out now via AFM.

GNR: KEVIN MAZUR; ANVIL: RUDY DE DONCKER/PRESS; GEDDY LEE & ALEX LIFESON: GEORGE PIMENTEL/GETTY

> “The [Springsteen] inspiration I guess comes from the energy in his music.”

★ HIGH HOPES

Freedom

Meet the Swedes hoping their new album will get them off couches and into nice hotels.

“The first time I put ‘freedom’ into a search engine was around the time of the 2016 US election,” recalls Magne Monroe, frontman and songwriter with up-and-coming Swedish heartland rockers Freedom. “I got so many pictures of Trump it almost put me off.”

So why choose such a profoundly un-Googleable name?

“It looks good on a T-shirt,” he reasons. “I just wanted something short that would work well on merchandise.”

Listening to Freedom’s raw but big-hearted second album *Stay Free!*, you suspect it won’t be long before we start to see a proliferation of Freedom merch. The band describe themselves as ‘working-class rock for the twenty-first century’. A friend, Hellacopters frontman Nicke Andersson, came up with a more pithy epithet, dubbing them ‘bargain-basement Springsteen’.

“I haven’t spoken to him about that but I guess it’s a compliment,” says Magne. “His take on it is that you’ll find the good stuff in any genre in the bargain bin, all the deep cuts and the quality material.”

Certainly, Magne is a Boss fan. “The inspiration I guess comes from the energy in his music. Our style is a bit more on the rock side, but it still has that uplifting part. I really like that seventies horny upbeat rock side of Springsteen.”

Freedom came together during the covid years, as Magne filled his enforced downtime with songwriting. Their self-titled debut was recorded in just three days in 2021. Although *Stay Free!* took a little bit longer, Freedom are a businesslike band. “When you rehearse as much as we do, the process is pretty fast,” he explains. “You’re not really working in the studio, you just go in there and take a snapshot. If you’ve done all your preparation, it’s pretty fast.”

In common with Springsteen, he draws much of his inspiration from everyday life, whether that’s *Johnny You’re Electric* off the new album, a tender portrait of a fallen friend who lived for rock’n’roll, or recent single *Tonight*, a candid look at band life, which has the killer couplet: ‘*Some people they get houses and some get a degree, and some people sleep on couches on a floor in Germany*.’ Too much information, surely?

“That’s still part of my life and a lot of my musician friends’ [lives] too,” he says with a laugh. “You get to that point in your early thirties when you start looking at what other people around you are doing. What am I doing? Well, I have a show booked and I’m sleeping on a couch. You’re kind of questioning: ‘Is this the right thing to do, or am I just wasting my time?’ I think everyone doing music has those kinds of doubts every now and then. But hopefully with this album we can move off the couches and start getting some nicer hotels.” **WS**

Stay Free! is out now via Wild Kingdom.

FOR FANS OF...

The 1978 follow up to *Born To Run* is Springsteen’s best album, according to Magne. “There are songs where he sounds really pissed off, and there are songs where he sounds happy. It’s all turned up to eleven. *Born To Run* has some excellent songs on there, but it’s an eight, not an eleven. *Darkness* is more of everything.”

Led Zep Documentary Imminent

Being Led Zeppelin is on the way – at last.

More than two years after it was reportedly completed, the first officially authorised and endorsed full-length Led Zeppelin documentary has finally found a distributor. *Becoming Led Zeppelin* has been acquired for release by Sony Classics Pictures and is now set for a big-screen rollout, although no date has been given.

"We have spent years designing this film to be experienced on the big screen with the best possible sound," says director Bernard McMahon.

A rough cut of the documentary, which features never-before-seen archive film and photographs, as well as state-of-the-art audio transfers of Zeppelin's music and the music of other artists who shaped their sound, premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2021. It is understood that the film has since been updated to include recently discovered footage of the band performing at the Bath Festival in 1970. **FL**

Led Zeppelin: coming to the big screen.

Brian Wilson Under Conservatorship

But new Beach Boys music could follow.

The Beach Boys are hopeful of making new music with Brian Wilson despite the 81-year-old having been placed under a conservatorship. Several sources have reported that the visionary singer, songwriter and producer is suffering from a "major neurocognitive disorder" similar to dementia.

However, Wilson's cousin and bandmate Mike Love insists that Brian is still more than capable of being creative, insisting that the Beach Boys would love to return to the studio.

"His long-term memory is right there," says Love. "His musical abilities, as long as he's alive he'll have those, but he does need medical supervision and care. His wife did take care of that."

Love believes that the court's decision to place Wilson under a conservatorship is for his own good: "It's not so negative as it sounds. He's seeing his children… he's being well taken care of." **DL**

NEWS

As this issue went to press, **Heart** cancelled their upcoming European tour to allow singer Ann Wilson to undergo a routine medical procedure. The Seattle band were due to perform six shows in the UK, with Squeeze as special guests.

Bruce Dickinson has become a patron of The Blake Cottage Trust, the charity restoring a house owned by the late poet William Blake in Felpham, Sussex. "William Blake has given me so much over the years and I want to repay the debt," says the Iron Maiden frontman.

Promoter Andy Copping confides that an unnamed extremely "big band" are set to play a "very, very special" secret set at this year's **Download Festival**.

Skid Row guitarist Dave 'The Snake' Sabo has once again ruled out the idea of Sebastian Bach returning to the band, who have been touring with Lzzy Hale of Halestorm on vocals following the exit of Erik Grönwall. "The answer has been the same for… I don't know – twenty thousand years now," says Sabo. "It's not gonna happen."

Alex Van Halen (pictured) is auctioning 350 pieces of musical equipment. The former Van Halen drummer has put various items of kit and various mementos up for sale, including drum sets, road cases, drum heads, cymbals, gongs, sticks and mallets, with a portion of the proceeds going to charity.

WELCOME BACK

Mitch Ryder

He had hits in the 60s and has been making music since, but if he had a hit now it would ruin his day.

It's been nearly six decades since Mitch Ryder & The Detroit Wheels drove *Jenny Take A Ride* into the US Top 10. The group lasted less than four years, but Ryder, now 79, is still pushing the pedal to the metal. His robust career in Europe, particularly Germany, continues with *The Roof Is On Fire*, a two-disc set recorded in there that's more incendiary than you'd expect from an elder statesman.

Why this live album?
I was celebrating my seventy-fifth birthday, and that particular group and I had been working together for about thirty years in one form or another. It's a two-hour show, without intermission.

How do you still do that at your age?
I don't know [laughs]. It's kind of tough to do, but what the heck. You get used to it. I don't know if it's in the genes or what.

The album is interesting in that it doesn't include any of the Detroit Wheels' sixties hits. What's your relationship to those songs now?
They're songs about energy, because lyrically there's nothing there to be had. I don't do any of those songs overseas. And in America I can't do any of my European songs, cos no one knows them.

It's kind of a schizophrenic career, then?
It feels like an alternative career. I can have an ongoing creative career [in Europe], and [in America] nobody's willing to touch me, either because I'm too old or my time's come and gone. It's crazy how disposable artists are in America, and [in Europe] they treat artists with a ton more respect and follow them from beginning to end.

What's next?
In August I'm going to Memphis to do a studio album for the same label [Ruf Records], and that's where all my attention is going now. They want, to quote them, an "American album", elements of rock and rhythm and blues. That to me describes what I was doing with the Detroit Wheels early on. That's what I'm gonna attempt to give them, but it's gonna be tough. You can't try to duplicate that energy you had as a teenager. So it's a real challenge.

That was the sound of your hits.
I kind of dread having a hit record, because my credibility as an artist disappears when that happens. I've been there, so I kinda know what it feels like, and everything changes. I've been lucky in that I never had to abandon the 'artist' title, because I never had a lot of commercial success with the twenty-plus CDs I've recorded [in Europe], and there's some real gems in there.

"I've been lucky in that I never had to abandon the 'artist' title."

You've been working on a stage musical, too. How's that coming along?
It's called *Hide Your Love Away*, and it's been laying on the shelf for a good seven, eight years – on a shelf, what I call the treasure chest. When I die it's one of those chests my wife will open to live on. There's also an album in there that's finished and not released.

You don't want the musical to be produced while you're alive?
No. I think it can be interpreted in so many ways. Some people are gonna read it and throw it in the trash, but there's gonna be one person who will understand the vision. There's got to be somebody as bat-crazy as me in this world that, given that property, would do it probably the same way I would do it. Hopefully she'll find him, or her. **GG**

The Roof Is On Fire is out now via Ruf.

LED ZEPPELIN: IAN DICKSON/GETTY; MITCH RYDER: GEORG PIERON/PRESS; ALEX VAN HALEN: JASON LAVERIS/GETTY

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HIGH HOPES

Battlesnake

Judge how these Aussie rockers sound by how they look and you'll be making a big mistake.

Nick Zammit can remember the exact moment he knew he wanted to become a member of Battlesnake. "I got a text message saying: 'We're starting a rock band that's going to be about wizards and dragons'," says the drummer. "I saw that and I was like: 'Yes!'"

That was seven years ago, and the Sydney-based seven-piece Battlesnake have just released their second album, *The Rise And Demise Of The Motorsteeple*. These days the words 'magnum' and 'opus' are thrown around with abandon, but this album is about as magnum and as opus as one can possibly get, with titles like *A Blessing Of Fire And Speed* and *Pterodactyl Firehawk* dovetailing gleefully with the kind of willful disregard for fashion norms that suggests the band might not be taken seriously were they not so seriously good.

"We're all heavily influenced by the world building of *Lord Of The Rings* and *Dune*," says guitarist Paul Mason. "We've worked hard to sort of develop this 'brand' and to have it all tie in thematically, and it would be amazing to think that we're on our way to creating our own movement, because we got some pretty crazy fans."

He's not wrong. Live clips of the band show them fully be-cloaked, as if gathered for an ancient, alien ritual, with frontman Sam Frank sporting a towering pair of horns while fans cower at his feet. "They're worshipping the guitar solo," Mason explains.

And those costumes?

"When we started we had this bag full of random costumes," says Zammit. "I used to wear a one-piece leopard onesie. Billy [O'Key, keytar] had Muay Thai shorts on with flags on his back."

"Ben [Frank, guitar] and I had leotards," adds Mason.

Before the robes arrived, the group progressed to wearing white Speedos with the band's logo embroidered on. By the time you read this they'll probably have moved on to something else.

If that all sounds a bit, well, silly, don't let it put you off, because *The Rise And Demise Of The Motorsteeple* is a beast of an album, full of wild ambition and packed with great ideas. The band describe themselves as a mix of Queen, Judas Priest, King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard and AC/DC. Which makes no sense until you hear the album, and then it very much does.

Battlesnake are serious. In 2022 they supported Kiss in Sydney on their End Of The Road tour, which made them more so.

"We're a humble band of seven dudes from Sydney," says Mason. "But it was still encouraging to me. We've got pyro now, and some pretty ballistic shows. It's just a case of making it happen, brick by brick." **FL**

The Rise And Demise Of The Motorsteeple is out now (self-released).

FOR FANS OF...

With their own songs jumping from one lofty idea to the next with a delightful disregard for conformity, it's no surprise when both Paul Mason and Nick Zammit immediately plump for Queen's classic album *A Night At The Opera*. "They were so charismatic," Zammit says of the band. "Their music was so unique and different."

"I got a text saying: 'We're starting a rock band that's going to be about wizards and dragons.'"

TOM WILKINSON/PRESS

Lindisfarne

Lady Eleanor

A song about death might not sound like hit-single material, but it struck a chord with the British public and helped transform the Geordie band's fortunes, and remains a classic of the period.

Words: **James McNair**

Lindisfarne's 1972 smash *Lady Eleanor* was an unlikely hit, not least because it was about snuffing it. "It's a very mystical song, but I know it's about death," the Geordie band's frontman Alan Hull recalled around the time of its first flush of success. "I wrote it almost in a trance."

Partly inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's 1839 gothic short story *The Fall Of The House Of Usher*, *Lady Eleanor* was one of some 300 compositions Hull had amassed prior to hooking up with his gifted folk-rock bandmates. The story goes that it was while he was still working as a psychiatric nurse in Newcastle, that Hull wrote *Lady Eleanor* and two more Lindisfarne gems (*Winter Song* and *Clear White Light*) in a single sitting during one fateful overnight shift in 1968. Stimulants may or may not have been taken.

"Something that showed the calibre of the man was that, where drugs and medication were concerned, Alan would never have dreamed of giving his patients something he hadn't already tried himself," Lindisfarne drummer Ray Laidlaw told this writer in 2023, smiling. "He was a very good psychiatric nurse, I think, but a bit unorthodox. He would take the patients down the pub, or play the piano to calm them down."

"I remember Alan saying: 'I can't believe all these people are buying a single about death!'"

The definitive version of *Lady Eleanor* featured on Lindisfarne's 1970 debut album *Nicely Out Of Tune* (UK No.8), but an earlier version resurfaced recently on the 2024 Hull rarities collection *Singing A Song In The Morning Light: The Legendary Demo Tapes 1967-1970*. Credited to 'Alan Hull And Brethren' – soon to join forces as Lindisfarne – the demo differs from the more famous version in two main ways. Crucially, Ray Jackson had yet to fully develop his spidery, deftly played mandolin part, and his work-in-progress version is somewhat buried in the demo's mix. The spectral organ so crucial to the definitive version's haunting atmosphere is also missing, but Hull's stunning lead vocal and Rod Clements's lithe, loping bass lines are already in place.

When Lindisfarne signed to Charisma Records in 1970, they were five unlikely lads who somehow found themselves on a prog-rock label. In 2023, Jackson recalled their early tour-bus jaunts on shared Charisma-roster tours: "Van der Graaf Generator at the back smoking jazz tabs, us in the middle with a crate of Newcastle Brown Ale, and Genesis down the front doing crosswords."

"We were perceived as wild men of the North," Clements recalled. "Which we played up to no end."

Later in Lindisfarne's career, Hull's highly politicised writing often explored the North/South divide, and that between rich and poor.

When *Lady Eleanor* was first released, in May 1971, initially it sank without trace. It was only after the UK No. 5 success in '72 of their skiffly, Clements-written *Meet Me On The Corner*, a single from Lindisfarne's platinum-selling 1971 album *Fog On The Tyne*, that *Eleanor* was "relaunched, not re-released" (Clements) and became a huge hit. The much more carefree *Meet Me On The Corner* had put Lindisfarne on the map, but Hull's spooky, allusive masterpiece went deeper and charted higher, its lyrics depicting '*A host of golden demons screaming lust and base desire*', and telling of how Eleanor '*Bid me come along with her to the land of the dancing dead*.'

"When Alan was working at St Nicholas Hospital he had access to various mind-altering drugs, including LSD," Jackson told me in 2023. "That might be where *Lady Eleanor* came from. But he also told me it was influenced by Traffic's *Forty Thousand Headmen*. He didn't lift it, and the two songs are very different, but if you listen to it you'll hear some similarities."

Poe's Rodrick Usher and Lady Eleanor are mentioned in the first verse of *Lady Eleanor*, but Hull's song also seems to owe something to Poe's 1842 *Eleonora*, not just *The Fall Of The House Of Usher*. Sexually charged, and with themes of madness and guilt, *Eleonora* sees the story's titular heroine visit its narrator, also her former lover, from beyond the grave.

Ray Laidlaw: "I remember Alan saying: 'I can't believe all these people are buying a single about death!' It was an unusual song and pretty unique to him. Alan had the same upbringing as the rest of us, but he was so articulate, probably because he was so well-read. I think *Lady Eleanor* is about insecurity, fear of death and madness. A lot of it came from Alan working in the psychiatric hospital. He got so much inspiration from the patients there and the things they said."

The song's recording was overseen by John Anthony, Charisma Records' in-house producer. Although a native of North Shields, just outside Newcastle, Anthony "spoke like a southerner and his image and outlook were every inch the London hip record-producer", Clements says today. "But he was very supportive re. bringing what we had into focus." Indeed, Anthony was so impressed by Lindisfarne circa *Nicely Out Of Tune* that he claimed he had found "England's answer to The Band".

Together with *Meet Me on The Corner*, *Lady Eleanor* changed everything for Lindisfarne. "Before that we were playing The Huddersfield Builder's Exchange," noted Ray Jackson, "then suddenly it was major venues."

Alan Hull died in 1995, aged 50, but his star continues to flicker. Sting, Elvis Costello and the Arctic Monkeys' Alex Turner are admirers of his songwriting, while young Geordie star Sam Fender recently covered Hull's heartfelt beacon for the homeless, *Winter Song*.

It's *Lady Eleanor*, though, that remains Hull's finest hour as a songwriter, and Ray Laidlaw is also fond of 70s Los Angeles funk band American Gypsy's cover version. "It's nothing like the way we did it," he says. "It's like *Shaft* by Isaac Hayes or something."

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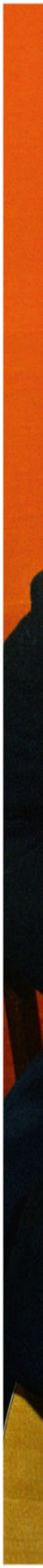
Ray Jackson's mandolin prowess on *Lady Eleanor* led to him playing the famous mandolin hook on Rod Stewart's *Maggie May*, from 1971's *Every Picture Tells A Story*. Long John Baldry, who sang backing vocals on the album's title track alongside Stewart and Maggie Bell, had seen Lindisfarne perform *Lady Eleanor* at The Marquee club in London, and suggested Jackson to Stewart. Credited only as "the mandolin player in Lindisfarne", Jackson was paid just £15 for the *Maggie May* session. "But it still did us the world of good promotion-wise," he recalled in 2023. "At that stage, people didn't really know who Lindisfarne were yet."



MAIN: RON HOWARD/POPPERFOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES; INSET: JORGEN ANGEL/GETTY

Lindisfarne: still fondly remembered for their 70s hits *Lady Eleanor, Fog On The Tyne* and *Meet Me On The Corner.*

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
May 1971

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.3

PERSONNEL
Alan Hull
Lead vocals, acoustic guitar
Ray Jackson
Mandolin, backing vocals
Simon Cowe
Guitar, backing vocals
Rod Clements
Bass, organ
Ray Laidlaw
Drums

WRITTEN BY
Alan Hull

PRODUCED BY
John Anthony

LABEL
Charisma

Q&A

Marcus King

The guitarist, singer, songwriter and bandleader on his new album, love and loss, mental health and having a 'real job'.

Interview: **Rob Hughes**

Marcus King's music lies at the intersection of blues, soul and southern rock, capped with a majestic voice that brings to mind soul greats Al Green or Bobby Womack. While the Marcus King Band ready their return – "For the first time in six years, we just got out of the studio together," King reveals. "We recorded some stuff down in Macon, Georgia, that we're very excited about" – his solo career continues apace with the deeply personal album *Mood Swings*, informed by King's struggles with mental health and addiction. The record ultimately carries a message of hope, while its soulful radiance is partly down to legendary producer Rick Rubin.

How did Rick Rubin shape your approach to *Mood Swings*?
Rick held a really high standard for what we wanted to do with this record. He really pushed me to go as deep as I'd ever been in terms of writing. Initially I played him the demo for *Bipolar Love*, and he wanted everything to be that vulnerable. So it was kind of an effort to do that, and I had to unlearn a lot of habits. I had to re-teach myself how to write non-metaphorically.

What kind of personal issues were you dealing with when writing the album?
Mood Swings is a break-up record that I started writing while I was still in a relationship. It chronologically details the many ups and downs that one experiences when dealing with manic depressive episodes. And it details what a partner goes through, being with someone who's struggling with those things, and substance abuse on top of that. I had to see a lot of these songs in the rear-view perspective to be able to write them and fully submerge myself into that grief.

One of the most affecting moments on the albums is *Save Me*, which suggests that someone pulled you back from the brink.
Like the majority of songs on this record, I wrote that about my ex. And it's a feeling that I still kind of reference in my day-to-day life. When you go through a prolonged period of being suicidal or having those tendencies, it's overwhelming when you're afraid to die for the first time. You get on aeroplanes a little differently, because you're afraid to lose what you have. It's kind of a heavy feeling.

You described your previous album, 2022's *Young Blood*, as a reimagining of Cream at Madison Square Garden. *Mood Swings* is much more soulful.
I think it's one of the clearest and most poignant records I've ever made, not only lyrically but sonically. It cuts right to the chase. And that's another thing that Rick had a great deal to do with. My guitar has always been my therapist, or my best friend, my babysitter. And I feel like I hid behind it a little on *Young Blood*, because I was in such a dark period in my life and incapable of being fully present in the moment. So with this record it almost felt like I went to some form of retreat.

Considering you're from a musical family, was there only ever one career option for you?
I was going one of two ways. The two positions in life that moved me the most, as a young man, were being in the gospel ministry or playing music. Music was always something that was around. And it was always viewed as a 'real job' in my household, something that could put food on the table for a family, because my grandfather and my father did it. For that reason they really encouraged that part of me, which was tremendously valuable.

When did you realise you had a great singing voice?
Around the time I was thirteen. I'd been through a big traumatic event in my life, and I didn't feel that the guitar was fully allowing me to have the escape I was desperate for. So I started singing and it provided me with that release. It took me a while to become comfortable, because so much of it is just confidence.

Are you okay to talk about that traumatic event?
It was to do with the first girl that I was ever really sweet on. We just had this connection. It was puppy love, y'know? One Halloween, she got in a car with these older kids, they got into a bad accident and she passed away. I still have a bracelet that she gave me in seventh grade. I was really broken up about that and it just compounded all the other abandonment issues that I'd faced in my life. I'm not trying to tell a sob story here, but there was a lot of other loss that happened after that too.

I believe you practise mindfulness these days. Do you meditate as part of that ?
I attempt to. I do it really as an effort to remain present and conscious of what's going on around me. In some ways my stage fright and my nerves seem to have gotten worse before a show. But once I get up there, it's worth it to go through that, because I'm able to provide a really honest performance for the audience. Performing is just like therapy, really. It's a roller-coaster of emotions for me on a show day. I mean, every day is a roller-coaster of emotions – my record's called *Mood Swings*!

You got married last year. How has that changed you?
Life's very different now. I'm married to a woman [singer and social media personality Briley Hussey] with a good head on her shoulders. When I met her she was in the corporate world, and she kind of came in and helped me turn my wild, crazy shit around.

It sounds like you're in a pretty good place right now.
Yeah. Day to day it can change at a moment's notice. But I feel really lucky to be back on the road and to be given the opportunity to be truly emotive each night with people who are equally as excited to be there as I am. When we do meet-and-greets, the gratitude runs both ways. It does so much for me and my mental health.

Mood Swings is out now via Snakefarm.

"It took me a while to become comfortable [singing], because so much of it is just confidence."

Marcus King: emerging from a dark period of his life while making new album *Mood Swings*.

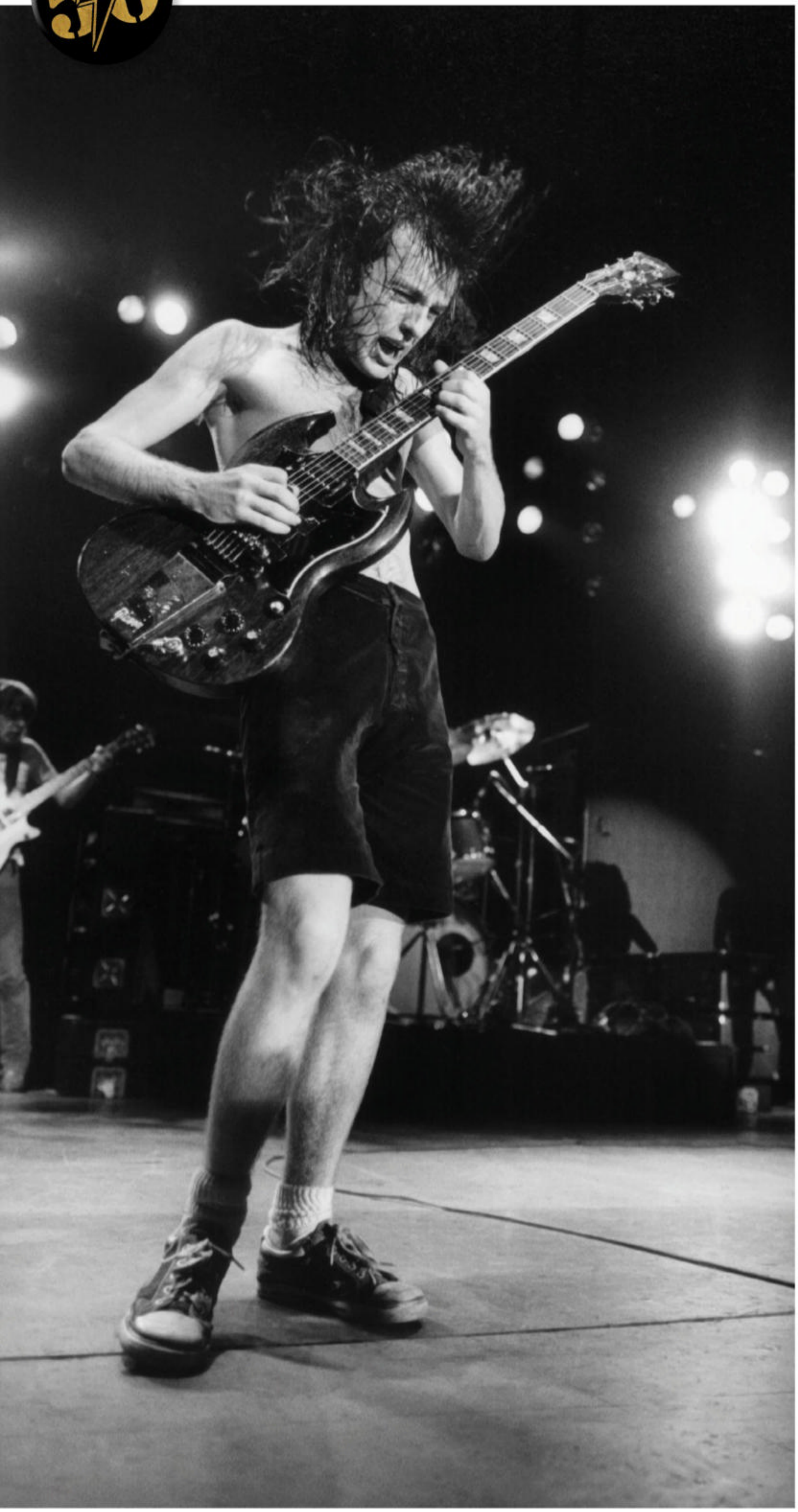
BT Scotland Stand

AND THE BAND PLAYED ON…

For more than 50 years, **AC/DC** have stuck steadfastly, uncompromisingly to their singular high-voltage rock'n'roll, through a storm-lashed career that has seen them survive changes in musical fashion, the death of band members and more. It's a long way to the top, and somehow they've managed to stay there. *Classic Rock*, Francis Rossi, Steven Tyler and Joe Perry look at how.

Words: **Paul Elliott**

WATTIE CHEUNG / CAMERA PRESS



The heat in the desert was 90 degrees or more as the little guy in the schoolboy uniform led his band out on to the stage. It was October 7, 2023, and at the Power Trip festival in Indio, California, an audience of 80,000 was witnessing the return of arguably the greatest and assuredly the ballsiest rock'n'roll band of them all.

It had been seven long years since AC/DC had played live, and for the fans gathered at Power Trip a sense of anticipation was mixed with trepidation. So much was riding on this show.

Singer Brian Johnson had turned seventy-five just three days earlier, and hadn't performed with the band since he was forced to step down from the *Rock Or Bust* tour in 2016 after suffering ear damage that threatened to render him deaf. This was AC/DC's first show with new drummer Matt Laug, and the last with bassist Cliff Williams, who'd held down that bottom end since 1977. On rhythm guitar, Stevie Young had already proved he could bang out those riffs with pick-splintering ferocity, just like his uncle Malcolm had done for so long. As for Angus Young, the little guy on lead guitar, he'd always said that he'd quit if he couldn't play the fast-fingered intro to *Thunderstruck* any more. But the clock was ticking. The eternal schoolboy, famed for his manic on-stage antics, was now pushing 70.

Even with the sun sinking low, it was like a furnace out there. "It was brutal," recalls Kurt Squiers, host of the long-running podcast *AC/DC Beyond The Thunder*. "I was feeling pretty exhausted just sitting there in the grandstand, sweating my ass off. And I'm fifty-five, not seventy-five. I was thinking: 'How is Brian gonna do this?' I really didn't think he was gonna make it through the show."

As AC/DC walked out, bathed in red light, the first surprise came with the opening song. Many times in the past they'd begin with something from their latest album. Occasionally they'd kick off with a classic like *You Shook Me All Night Long*. But this time they went with a deep cut, *If You Want Blood (You've Got It)*. And as Angus stood centre stage cranking out the staccato riff, another surprise: the long hair flowing from under his velvet cap was now as white as snow.

The band locked in to a heavy groove. The audience bounced. And as Johnson's rasping voice cut through – *'We got what you want, and you got the lust!'* – Squiers had his fists in the air. "It was awesome," he says now.

What AC/DC delivered at Power Trip was a marathon 24-song set stacked with deathless rock classics, and with a few more surprises thrown in. From the early days in the 70s, those great songs that Bon Scott used to sing with them: *Highway To Hell, Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap, Hell Ain't A Bad Place To Be, High Voltage, T.N.T., Whole Lotta Rosie, Let There Be Rock*. From the 80s, 90s and beyond, their best stuff with Brian: *Back In Black, Thunderstruck, Hells Bells, Stiff Upper Lip, Shoot To Thrill, Rock N Roll Train, You Shook Me All Night Long, For Those About To Rock (We Salute You)*. From the latest album, for the very first time in concert, *Demon Fire* and *Shot In The Dark*. And from deep in the catalogue, for the true AC/DC connoisseur: *Shot Down In Flames, Dog Eat Dog, Have A Drink On Me, Sin City, Riff Raff, Givin The Dog A Bone*.

In a VIP enclosure close to the stage, the four members of Metallica watched AC/DC's set ahead

NEIL ZLOZOWER / ATLAS ICONS

Welcome to England. AC/DC in London, 1976: (l-r) Malcolm Young, Phil Rudd, Angus Young, Bon Scott, Mark Evans.

of their own the following night, all playing air guitar, all singing words that are burned into the consciousness of every rock fan.

Out in the bleachers, Kurt Squiers felt that Matt Laug, on his debut, had nailed it. "I would call him the unsung hero of the night," he says. "He was totally on point. *Let There Be Rock* is the hardest song to play for a drummer, and he absolutely killed it!" He was amazed by the energy of Angus. "He was doing the Chuck Berry duck walk, the drop and spin – and his solos were great." Most of all he was knocked out by Johnson, who he feared wouldn't get through the set. "I felt like Brian had a lot to prove," he says. "He gave everything he had in the tank, and really, this was his night."

For AC/DC, Power Trip was a triumph. Then four months later came the announcement of the European tour that will see the band return to the UK this month with two shows at Wembley Stadium.

It's been a long time coming, but AC/DC are, in the words of a rowdy old song from 1985, very much back in business.

For a while it looked like they were done for. In 1980, AC/DC had pulled off the greatest comeback in the history of rock'n'roll when Johnson joined the band following the death of Bon Scott. They dug in to deliver what turned out to be the biggest-selling rock album of all time, *Back In Black*. But in recent years Angus has had to dig even deeper.

Recording 2014's *Rock Or Bust* album had been a strange experience for Angus without his brother around. Malcolm Young had been the band's leader since day one, but his struggle with dementia left him unable to play on the record. His role was taken by Stevie, keeping it in the family at least.

The *Rock Or Bust* tour also proved problematic from the outset. With drummer Phil Rudd absent due to serious legal issues, Angus had turned to a familiar face, Chris Slade, who had played with the band between '89 and '94. And while the tour ran smoothly enough for the best part of a year, Johnson's withdrawal in March 2016 put the whole operation in limbo – until Angus made a decision that stunned fans and media alike: bringing in Guns N' Roses singer Axl Rose to front AC/DC for the remaining 22 shows.

'In 1980, AC/DC had pulled off the greatest comeback in the history of rock'n'roll.'

"Axl did a great job," Angus said. Certainly Axl had the voice for it. He also persuaded Angus to bring a few Bon-era deep cuts back into the set – *Riff Raff* and *Rock 'N' Roll Damnation* – and even a song they'd never played live before, *Touch Too Much*, Axl's favourite AC/DC song.

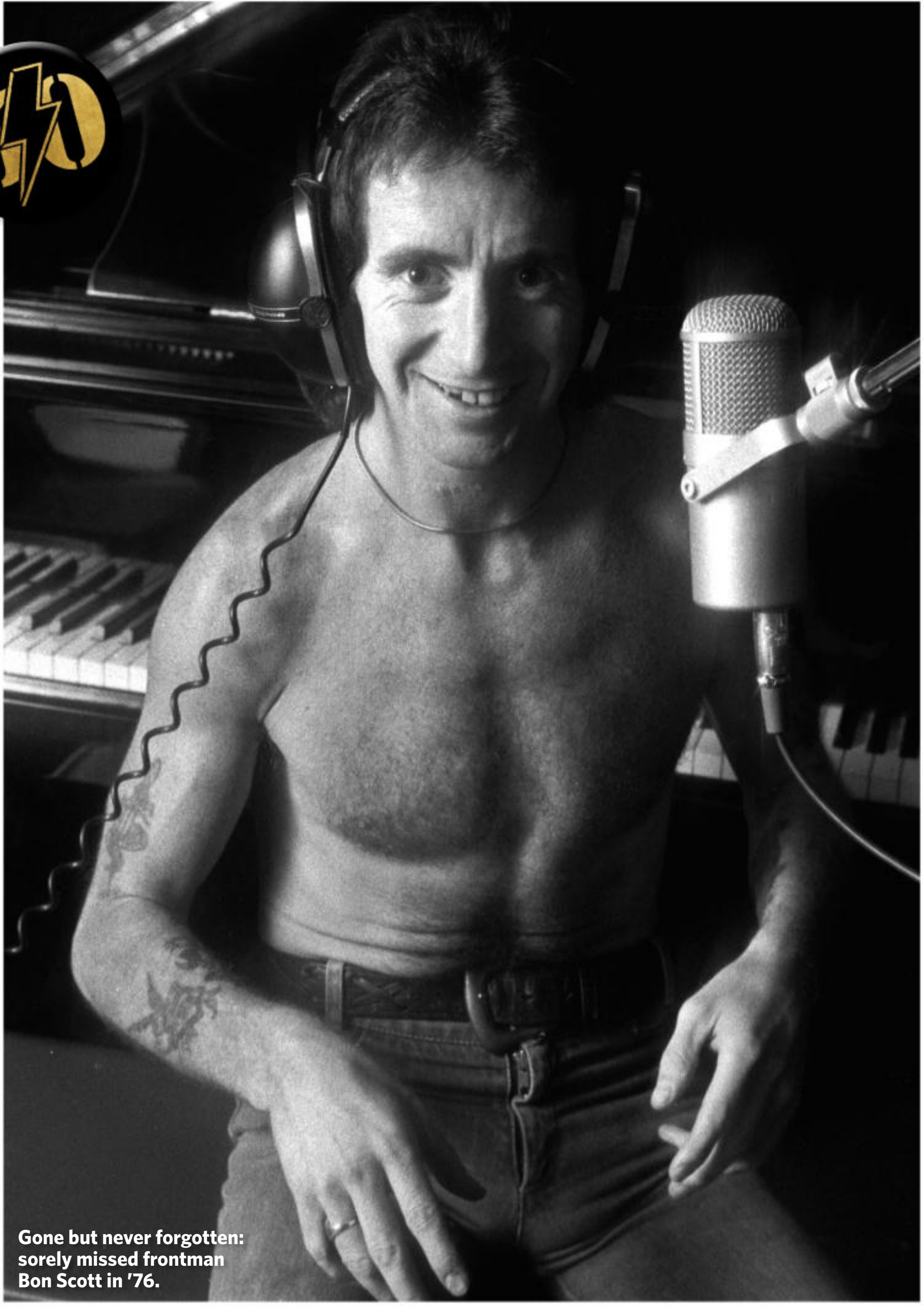
But when the tour ended in Philadelphia on September 20, 2016, it seemed as if Angus was fighting a losing battle. Axl returned to his role with GN'R. Cliff Williams, missing his close friend Brian Johnson, announced his retirement from touring. Stevie Young and Chris Slade would, of course, stick around as long as they were wanted. But with Malcolm gone, Brian's future uncertain, Cliff out of action and Phil Rudd in a whole lot of trouble, Angus was at that point the last man standing from the *Back In Black* line-up.

Even worse was to follow, with the death of Malcolm on November 18, 2017. But as Angus would tell *Classic Rock*, it was Malcolm's wish that the band would carry on. "He always used to say: 'You plough on.'" Bon Scott's parents had said much the same to Angus and Malcolm at Bon's funeral in 1980.

What happened in 2020 with the *Power Up* album was a remarkable turnaround, as Angus got the old gang back together – Cliff, Phil, Stevie and, most important of all, Brian, who told *Classic Rock* of his recovery in somewhat oblique terms, stating: "It was magical!" Angus had the best possible version of AC/DC up and running again. The album was solid, *Shot In The Dark* a new anthem, with Johnson singing as he's always done – "like someone dropped a truck on his foot", as Angus put it so succinctly.

Then the pandemic hit. Plans for a world tour were put on hold. Nothing was heard of AC/DC for three years until Power Trip. Now, as they hit the road again, there's not one but two new guys in the band. With Williams bowing out at Power ▷

HEILEMANN / CAMERA PRESS



Gone but never forgotten: sorely missed frontman Bon Scott in '76.

Trip, and Rudd seemingly out of the picture for good, the American rhythm section of drummer Matt Laug and bassist Chris Chaney is an entirely new combination. Both have impressive credentials. Laug played on Alanis Morissette's monster hit album *Jagged Little Pill* and on the second and last album by Slash's Snakepit, *Ain't Life Grand*. Chaney has also worked with Morissette in a varied career that includes a stint with Jane's Addiction and session work for stars such as Bryan Adams, Cher and Meat Loaf. They're seasoned pros. Rock-solid.

AC/DC are not alone in having to make changes late in a long career. The Rolling Stones had already begun touring with Steve Jordan on drums before the death of Charlie Watts made Jordan's position permanent. ZZ Top had maintained the same three-man line-up for more than 50 years when they lost bassist Dusty Hill, whose wish shortly before he died was for the group to continue with their guitar tech Elwood Francis in his place. Only a few major rock bands operating since the 70s have their classic line-ups mostly intact, notably Aerosmith, Def Leppard and Iron Maiden. What AC/DC have now is what Guns N' Roses have with Slash and Duff McKagan alongside Axl. As long as Johnson is there with Angus, it feels right, legit.

Angus has always held firm to that old maxim 'The show must go on'. It's why he pushed on with Axl to finish the *Rock Or Bust* tour. Why he carried on without Malcolm, and without Bon so many years before. It's no easy thing to keep a rock'n'roll band going for as long as Angus has. And nobody understands that better than those who've travelled that same road.

> **"No minor chords here, mate - just major chords hitting you in the balls!"**
>
> **Gene Simmons**

The first time Kiss's Gene Simmons saw AC/DC play live was on a summer night in August 1977 at the Whisky A Go Go in Los Angeles, and he remembers it as if was yesterday. "I'd never heard of AC/DC, and I thought it might be a gay band," Simmons recalls, noting that in America 'AC/DC' is a slang term for bisexuality.

What he discovered instead was the most straight-shooting of rock'n'roll bands, both in terms of the simplistic drive of the music and the overtly heterosexual content of Bon Scott's lyrics. Among the songs that were regularly in the band's set back then were *Whole Lotta Rosie* (about a generously proportioned groupie), *Hell Ain't A Bad Place To Be* (about a woman messing with Bon's head) and *The Jack* (about an STD passed around the band by a female admirer).

AC/DC's performance that night connected with Simmons on a visceral level.

"I was blown away," he says. "No minor chords here, mate - just major chords hitting you in the balls! It was all - as you say in England - meat and two veg. I was just mesmerised by this band. Bon Scott was a force of nature with his shirt off, drinking. It was like a homeless crazy guy had jumped up on stage. He never had that sort of rock-star sheen, or any kind of showmanship. It just it felt like a stream-of-consciousness expulsion of his inner demons on stage."

Simmons saw a similarly manic quality in Angus: "When the lights went out at the end of each song, Angus was still going crazy, doing that Chuck Berry thing during the blackouts with nobody watching. And I said to myself: this is the real deal. This is a guy that does it because he feels it inside."

After the show, Simmons went into full schmooze mode in the band's dressing room.

"In those days I wore seven-inch heels even when not on tour," he says, "so I was towering over Angus, who is a tiny human being. He said: 'Oh, you're that Kiss bloke with the tongue!' I said: 'Yeah. I need to talk with you.' I had a limo outside and I convinced him to come with me to Ben Frank's, a twenty-four-hour restaurant where touring musicians would eat and hang out before they went to the Rainbow to pick up chicks. Angus ordered beans and frankfurters, and I remember him picking up a frankfurter with his left hand and biting into it on one side of his mouth because he had a load of teeth missing. I was talking my head off, like a fan. I said: 'You're coming on tour with us!'"

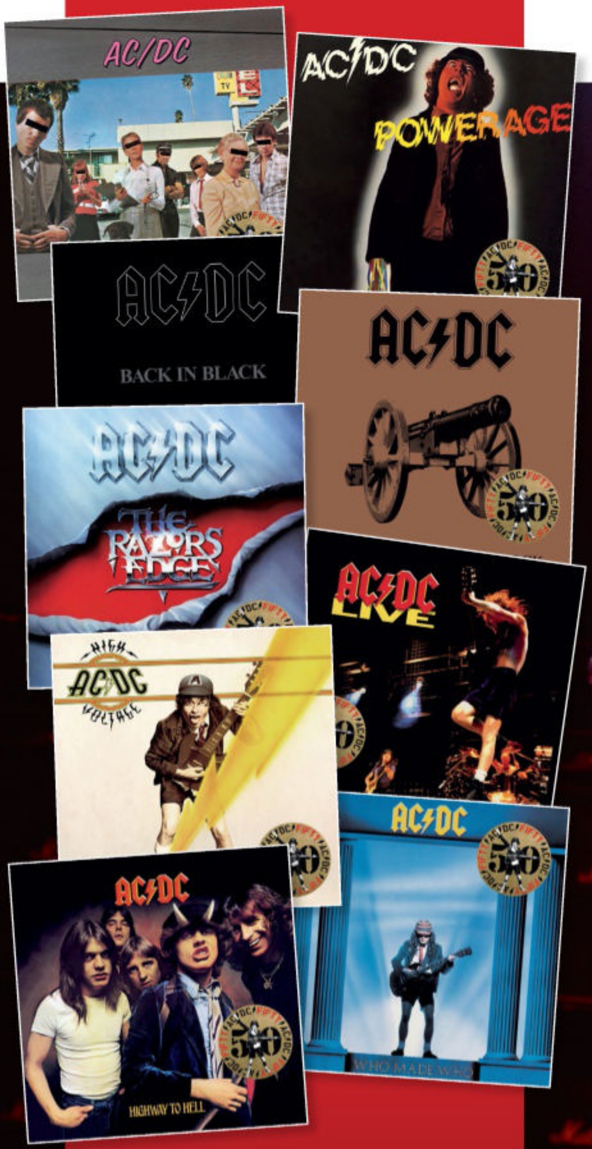
AC/DC subsequently opened for Kiss on the *Alive II* tour, a handful of dates in December 1977. Simmons remembers how he and Kiss frontman Paul Stanley would thrill to the sound of AC/DC thumping through their dressing-room wall: "We would pause putting on the make-up to talk about this band. It was three chords, kick, snare, kick, snare - bang! We were stunned by the simplicity and the brilliance of it. So my recollections are fond. Was a fan, still a fan."

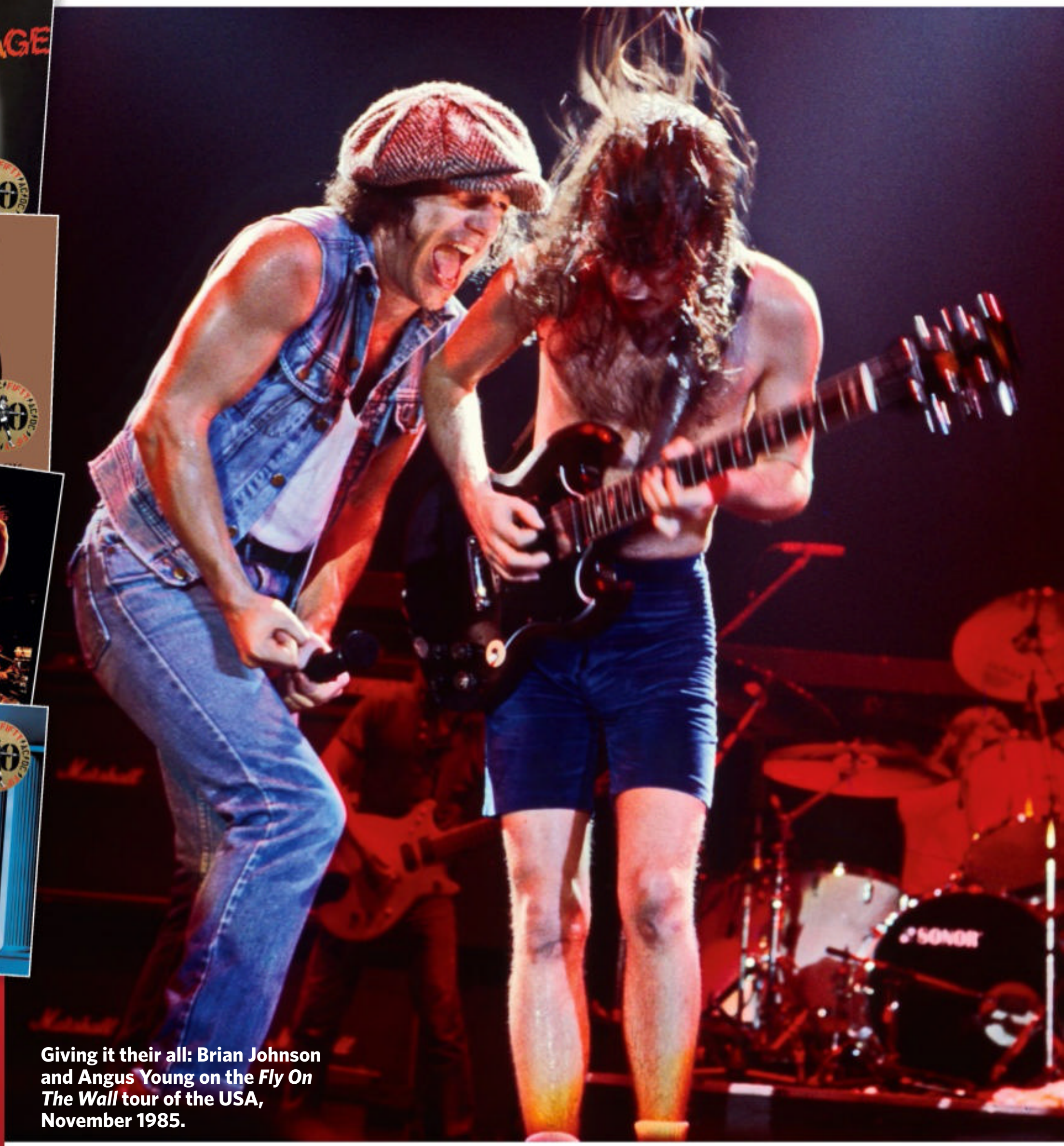
Simmons is not inclined towards sentimentality. As he often says: "It's called the music *business* for a reason." During the course of Kiss's 50-year career, only he and Paul Stanley were ever-present in the line-up. For the last 20 of those years they had drummer Eric Singer and lead guitarist Tommy Thayer made-up like original members Peter Criss and Ace Frehley. When the band's *End Of The Road* farewell tour concluded at New York's Madison Square Garden on December 2, 2023, they revealed the future of Kiss: as ▷

PHILIP MORRIS/SHUTTERSTOCK

One of rock's great singer-guitarist pairings: Brian Johnson and Angus Young, June 1986.

STEVE DOUBLE / CAMERA PRESS





Giving it their all: Brian Johnson and Angus Young on the *Fly On The Wall* tour of the USA, November 1985.

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"At the end of the day, people want to hear the songs," he says, "and that's more important than who's in the band. AC/DC have had what, over twenty different members? Kiss have had different line-ups, just like football teams have different line-ups, and if you're a fan of the team, you're a fan of the team.

"With Van Halen in the early days, David Lee Roth was God. On stage nobody could touch him. So you couldn't imagine Van Halen without Roth. But you know what? Life actually happens while you're busy making plans. And AC/DC, without Bon Scott, became an even bigger band. So rules are pretty much made to be broken. Could AC/DC still be AC/DC with Axl Rose? Sure they could! Because it's either convincing or it's not."

For Simmons it's all a matter of perspective. "If you're fourteen years old and crazy about AC/DC, a new line-up doesn't affect you the same way as somebody who's had that band as the soundtrack of their life for twenty, thirty, forty years."

What he says in conclusion is the importance of knowing when to quit. He is proud that Kiss went out on a high with their final tour, but, as he admitted, the tour was hard going for man in is seventies. His stage outfit, with body armour, weighs 40 pounds. "And then you've got to spit fire, fly through the air and do that for two hours!"

He notes the physicality of how Angus performs on stage, and warns: "Soon it's going to come to an end, because Mother Nature always wins. So quit while you're ahead. Because whether you're Muhammad Ali or Mike Tyson, the best of the best, if you stay in the ring too long some loser is going to come out there and knock you out.

"We stopped after fifty years. That's enough. You made your money. Get off the stage before the jokes come. Respect the stage, love your fans, and go out on top. Don't be the fat, bloated Elvis in Las Vegas. Don't do that."

When Francis Rossi thinks about AC/DC, the first thing he expresses is guitar-player envy. "When Angus plays, it's magic to me," he sighs. "It's not magic like Jeff Beck, who could play anything. But it's unique. It has that intangible quality."

In the glory days of Status Quo, Rossi and Rick Parfitt were a two-guitar team as powerful as Angus and Malcolm Young. They also had, for many decades, a relationship as close as brothers. And just as Angus had forged ahead without

MAIN: GEORGE BODNAR ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX; FRANCIS ROSSI: TINA KORHONEN/PRESS

Malcolm, so Rossi has continued to lead Quo in the years since Parfitt's death in 2016.

"We used to joke about one of us dying when we were in our early twenties," Rossi says. "Especially if we'd had a smoke. Rick said he'd end up dead in a fucking Mandrax factory and I'd end up dead somewhere with a joint in my mouth. We would laugh about that all the time. But the older we got the closer it got, and then it happened to Rick. But if it had happened to me, Rick would have gone on. And I like to think that people would have supported him."

Parfitt's replacement in Status Quo is Dublin-born Richie Malone, who at 38 is roughly half Rossi's age.

"The fact is, we got this kid in who's as close to Rick as we can get," he says. "Some fans are not happy with that. But Rick and I had already discussed it after Rick had a heart attack and couldn't work. He said to me: 'Who are you gonna use?' I said: 'Richie, surely?' He said: 'Yeah.' So we'd already decided that if Rick couldn't carry on, Richie was the boy."

Back in 2013, Rossi and Parfitt had done exactly what diehard Quo fans had longed for, reuniting the band's classic line-up with bassist Alan Lancaster and drummer John Coghlan – the quartet known famously as the Frantic Four. When they toured, fans were ecstatic; Rossi and Parfitt less so.

"We were struggling for most of that tour," Rossi recalls. "I remember being in rehearsals thinking: 'Shit, this isn't gonna work!' Seriously, Rick and I were shitting ourselves. But when we played Hammersmith, the audience went nuts. I don't think I've ever heard or felt a reaction like it. People in the audience were crying. So I loved it that we could do that for those people, but you can't live on the fumes of the seventies. It's like Nile Rodgers said: 'Sure I like to look at my past, but I don't like to stare.' Alan Lancaster wanted to go on. He was very upset when that didn't happen. But it would have been like getting back together with your ex-wife."

Rossi believes that the current version of Quo is the best it could be, and wishes that those fans who were moved to tears by the Frantic Four reunion might see it that way too.

"I'm obsessive about Status Quo," he says, "trying to make it right, trying to make it better, trying to appease the people who say: 'No, it's not the real band.' It really hurts. And it really hurts the other guys that are in the band. John ['Rhino' Edwards, bassist] has been in the band longer than Alan Lancaster was. Andrew Bown [keyboard player] has been in the band since 1973! The fans, I love them to death, but they can get you in a straitjacket. They have to let us breathe."

Rossi still gets emotional when he talks about Parfitt. For all the difficulties in their relationship in those final years, he will always miss what they once had. "I loved the guy," he says. "I've got one photo in the house of me and Rick. It was taken not long before he died. Fucking fabulous picture."

Gun fire: Axl Rose fronting AC/DC in the Czech Republic, May 22, 2016.

"When Angus plays, it's magic to me. It's unique. It has that intangible quality."

Francis Rossi

Without his old partner, Rossi keeps the band going because, like Angus Young, this is all he knows. He's seventy-five, same as Brian Johnson, and he explains: "I have to work. It gives me purpose. And it's hard to let it go when you've thrived on this adulation all your life. But I have to train for a tour. I work out and I swim. I practise guitar every day anyway. And with touring now, we can only do two days on then one day off. The Stones don't do two on, and I doubt if Angus could. I mean, his neck must fucking hurt after a gig! The reality is we are old men, and it's weird to think that we've all got this far. When you're young you can't think past forty because it seems so far away. Well it wasn't that far away in the end, was it?"

Rossi reckons that if Johnson were to lose his voice, AC/DC could still continue without him. "All that screaming?" he says, laughing. "Brian Johnson is great at that. But with the greatest respect, there's very little character to Brian's voice. They could get someone else to do sing like him."

He cites Queen + Adam Lambert as an example of the seemingly impossible becoming reality: "You'd have thought no way can that band go on without Freddie. But this is showbiz – yes it can!"

Even so, he can't envisage the Rolling Stones without Mick Jagger or Keith Richards. "At any moment one of those could go," he says, "because we're in those realms. And I very much doubt that they'd carry on then."

As for Status Quo, Rossi accepts that when he eventually goes, the band goes with him. "I suppose so," he says, with another dry laugh. "But you're asking the person with the ego."

Way back in 1978, when Aerosmith were touring America, flying high before their taste for excess brought them down, guitarist Joe Perry had enough presence of mind to realise that their support act, a bunch of ruffians from Australia, had something special about them. "AC/DC seemed to boil rock'n'roll down to its essence," Perry recalls. "With every song, they managed to make it sound fresh."

All these years later, Perry is in an enviable position. Despite all the drugs they did in the past, when he and singer Steven Tyler were christened 'The Toxic Twins', the current incarnation of Aerosmith is missing only drummer Joey Kramer from the classic line-up of '78.

After decades of sobriety, Perry is in now great shape for a man of 73. "They say rock'n'roll keeps you young," he muses. "And having done it for as long as I have, it's hard to envision my grandfather, who passed away when he was younger than I am, doing this. So after a certain point it's time to throw the calendar away. The whole perception of what you should and should not be able to do goes away."

Nonetheless, Aerosmith's career is now winding down. In September they embark on ▷

AC/DC at their Rockwalk induction September 15, 2000: (l-r) Brian Johnson, Malcolm Young, Cliff Williams, Angus Young, Phil Rudd.

TOP: FRANCESCO CASTALDO / MONDADORI PORTFOLIO / CAMERA PRESS. BOTTOM: ROBERT KNIGHT ARCHIVE/GETTY; JOE PERRY: ROSS HALFIN

their Peace Out farewell tour, which, echoing AC/DC's *Rock Or Bust* tour, was postponed last year when Steven Tyler blew out his voice after just four shows.

In reference to the *Rock Or Bust* tour, Perry says: "It didn't suck having Axl out there on the microphone, you know?" But like so many AC/DC fans, he feels that the band need Johnson.

"Angus is really the frontman," he says. "He's the guy. So maybe they could do it without Brian if somebody else could go out there and sing. And I think they'd sell tickets, because people still want to hear those songs. But I don't know, man. It's a tough one. Without Brian, I think a lot of people would probably walk away wishing he was there. He's such a huge part of that band. Most people don't remember seeing AC/DC with Bon Scott, and it's hard for a band to replace that sort of lead singer. But Brian has been there since 1980, and *Back In Black* was a huge album with him on it. So for all intents and purposes, Brian is the voice of AC/DC. And for it to be as big and powerful as AC/DC can be, you need Brian Johnson."

Perry is also as surprised as Gene Simmons and Francis Rossi are that Angus can still perform at such a physically demanding level.

"I can't believe it!" he says with a laugh. "I've seen some recent AC/DC shows, and Angus may not do everything that he used to do, but even if he just stood there and played and was able to rock out and not move at all, people would still come to see him play. There will be a point when he cannot do certain things, but if he can play, people will be there because his heart is in it.

"And his body – you know, the physiology of it. If they were to take X-rays and all that stuff, you'd see that his joints have taken a serious beating. But your body adapts itself to the stuff that you keep doing. Angus is in training, so to speak. So all things being equal, I think he'll be able to do a lot of what he does now or used to do for a long time. And as long as he does, I think they'll keep going. As long as he can play, and as long as he hasn't damaged himself too much as far as his hands go, and if arthritis doesn't eat away at him, they'll keep going. I mean, who knows? There's no fucking rule book on this. There's no instruction book on this rock'n'roll thing. Even if you can hardly walk, as long as you can play guitar, and do your thing, and play those

JOSH CHEUSE x2

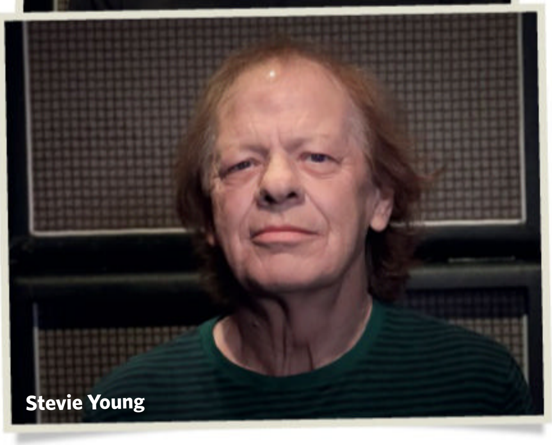
Getting ready to rock: AC/DC in rehearsal for the latest tour.

Brian Johnson

Chris Chaney

Angus Young

Matt Laug



Stevie Young

"It'll be a sad day when AC/DC isn't around any more, when you won't be able to see Angus play live."

Joe Perry

fucking insane riffs, like *Whole Lotta Rosie* and *Let There Be Rock*, the body will adapt itself, and you keep going. It's amazing."

Ultimately, what Perry says about Angus and AC/DC relates also to Aerosmith and every other classic rock band entering their final phase of a lengthy career.

"We've seen so many artists that have sadly passed away from misdeeds and old age," he says. "So bands like AC/DC, Aerosmith and the Rolling Stones, we're the last of a dying breed. There won't be another AC/DC, just like there won't be another Guns N' Roses. It'll be some other kind of music that people want to go see, and maybe there will be some new rock bands to fill the slot. There's certainly contenders out there.

"But it'll be a sad day when AC/DC isn't around any more, when you won't be able to see Angus play live. There will never be another AC/DC. But the music will always be around."

For now, however, the show goes on. Kurt Squiers, for one, was taken aback by the scale of AC/DC's European tour: "Ten dates in Germany alone? I was like: 'Whoah, are they going to be able to do that?' I was shocked, because at Power Trip I was praying that Brian got through that one show."

Power Trip was Squiers's twenty-sixth AC/DC gig, and it cost him a small fortune. "The ticket alone was $2300," he says, wincing. But he reckons it was worth every one of those dollars to see the band with Brian Johnson again, having witnessed two of their performances with Axl, when it was, in his words, "a different animal".

As an AC/DC fan since 1979, when as a 10-year-old he first heard *Highway To Hell* blasting from his big brother's hi-fi, Squiers is still adjusting to the fact that there are two new guys in the band. "While I'm happy for Matt Laug and Chris Chaney, it still feels kind of weird now that Cliff and Phil are gone," he says. But most of all he's just happy that AC/DC are still around, and hopeful that this tour will not be their last.

"I feel like that question has been around for fifteen, twenty years," he says, laughing. "And I've been wrong every time. There's always been a kind of mystery surrounding the band, and that's one of the reasons why I love them. I don't think they would ever say: 'This is the final tour.' And maybe that's because even they don't know. It all boils down to Angus. If you remove Angus, there's no more AC/DC. It's Angus who's driving this thing, and he literally will play until he can't any more."

The last scheduled date of AC/DC's *Power Up* tour is on August 17, at Croke Park in Dublin, and Squiers is thinking about making the long trip there from his home in North Carolina. "Who knows?" he says. "It might be the last show they ever play."

His love for AC/DC runs deep. The feeling he had when he first heard *Highway To Hell*, he still feels now.

"Part of what's great about AC/DC is that they keep you forever young," he says, smiling. "I mean, look at Angus, he's still dressed like a kid! You know, who wants to grow up?"

CHRISTIE GOODWIN x6

LET THERE BE DRUMS... LET THERE BE GUITAR... LET THERE BE ROCK!

Given events surrounding **AC/DC** in recent years, anyone could be excused for thinking it was all over for one of rock's all-time-great bands. But then... *Classic Rock* gets thunderstruck at the first show of their first tour in eight years. Let there be AC/DC!

Words: **Dave Everley**

The hornet's buzz of a tattoo needle echoes down a ground-floor corridor in Kaue, a venue-come-arts centre perched on the edge of a roundabout in a quiet suburb of the modest-sized German city of Gelsenkirchen. Usually this place is home to a mix of comedy and music – recent international names to play here include Walter Trout and Ten Years After. Today it's being used for something different.

Later this evening, the nearby Veltins-Arena stadium will host the opening night of AC/DC's first tour in eight years, and Kaue has been repurposed for the occasion. For the next few days this Tardis-like brick building, with its warren of passageways, performance rooms, bars and outdoor drinking spaces, has been transformed into the High Voltage Dive Bar. Inside it's an AC/DC fan's fever dream. A giant display of classic AC/DC posters greets punters as they walk in. Upstairs the darkened main room is lit by the red glow of the massive AC/DC logo from the *Shot In The Dark* video, its outline reflected in the glossy black floor as people pose for photos with Angus Young-style Gibson SG or Malcolm Young signature Gretsch guitars. There are merch stands where fans can buy AC/DC vinyl, T-shirts, caps, baby grows, bath robes, shot glasses and pretty much anything else their name can be printed on, before hitting the food stall for a burger that has the AC/DC logo stamped on the bun. And for those brave souls who want to prove their love of the band is more than skin-deep, there are a pair of tattooists inking era-specific variations of that same logo on the bodies of devoted fans.

'As long as there's a man in a school uniform up on stage, AC/DC remains AC/DC.'

Dominik is one of them. He has a raw-looking *Razors Edge*-era logo on his arm. It looks like it hurt. "The pain was okay," he says casually, as the tattooists behind him clean their needles in readiness for their next victim. "I can tolerate pain."

Dominik was introduced to the band via the mix tapes his dad made for him, although he gets bonus hipster points for having 1975's Aussie-only *TNT* as his favourite album. He's attending the second of the two shows AC/DC are playing here in Gelsenkirchen in a couple of nights, and it will be the first time he's seen them. ▷

CHRISTIE GOODWIN/PRESS

Thunderstruck: AC/DC live in Gelsenkirchen, plus scenes from the Dive Bar that'll follow them around Europe.

"The last time they played in Germany was the exact week I was doing my last exams in school, so I had to decide between the exams and the concert," he says. "I was not expecting another tour, especially now that not all the long-time members are in the band. There was no way I was missing them this time. Does anyone know if they'll be back?"

It's a sentiment echoed by Hansi, an early 50-something currently drinking a beer under one of the canopies in the beer garden. He's one of several people who have gone full Angus cosplay: schoolboy cap, white shirt, shorts. It's a release from the suit he has to wear as the boss of his own small business. "Which other band can you dress up as a schoolboy for?" he says with faultless German logic. Hansi first saw AC/DC as a kid in the mid-80s, and hasn't missed them on any of their tours here since. "I considered flying to see them in the desert," he says, referring to their comeback appearance at last year's Power Trip festival in the US, "but my wife said it was too expensive."

He's excited for tonight, even if German reserve prevents him from duck-walking in circles at the prospect. "I hoped they would return, but I didn't expect them to," he says. "It might be the last chance I have to see them." He takes a gulp of his beer and adjusts his schoolboy cap. "So I am going to enjoy them."

Guten abend, then, and welcome to the show no one expected but everyone wanted. When AC/DC bowed out at the end of their *Rock Or Bust* tour eight years ago they were battered, bruised and depleted.

Malcolm Young, their founding rhythm guitarist and steel-hearted commander-in-chief, was at home, stricken by the dementia that would claim his life the following year. Phil Rudd, AC/DC's all-time greatest drummer, was on the naughty step after being caught fag-deep in some ill-advised drug-and-death threat-related shenanigans. Singer Brian Johnson retired injured halfway through the tour, his hearing in danger of failing completely (last-minute sub Axl Rose famously stepped in to save the day, although even he did it while sitting on a giant throne with his leg in a cast). When bassist Cliff Williams announced he was retiring at the end of the *Rock Or Bust* tour, that seemed to be that. So long, and thanks for all the riffs. Except AC/DC are the world's least sentimental band, and there was no way retirement, potential hearing loss, legal trouble, death or any combination of the above was going to stop them.

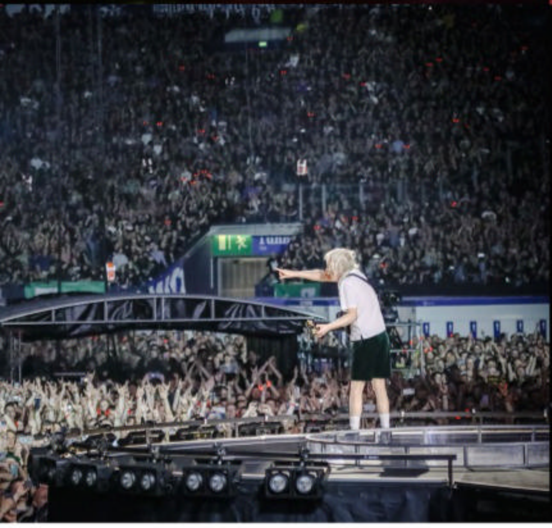
While 2020's *Power Up* album might have been a surprise, it wasn't actually that much of a surprise to long-time 'DC watchers (although just how good it sounded compared with the pedestrian *Rock Or Bust* was unexpected). Even last year's Power Trip appearance, along with Metallica, Judas Priest, Tool and more made sense, although all but the most optimistic devotee saw that more as a valedictory one-off than the start of a new chapter for this venerable band.

Yet here we are, at the Veltins-Arena, a vast covered stadium that usually plays home to football team FC Schalke 04 (currently in the German equivalent of the Championship, but sleeping giants according to locals). Tonight, 70,000 people – at least a third of whom are wearing light-up devil horns in grand modern AC/DC fashion – are here for a moment many of them doubted would happen. The fact that it's being trumpeted as the band's 50th anniversary is cause for double celebration, even if pedants will point out the band played their very first gig on New Year's Eve 1973.

The lights dim at 8.30 on the nose, and the giant screens that span the stage pop into life with an animated intro video featuring a flame-red hot rod with lightning-bolt furry dice hanging from the rear-view mirror and an Angus Young hood ornament, screeching down the local autobahn and into some virtual backstage area. There's a roar from the crowd as the band appear, not exactly erupting on to the massive stage as ambling unassumingly into view, and crack straight into steamrolling version of *If You Want Blood (You've Got It)*.

"It's wonderful to see ya all again," Johnson mutters cheerfully at the end of tonight's opening number, like he's walked into an afternoon session at his local boozer rather than kicking off his band's first tour in eight years. "Enjoy yourselves, okay?" If his voice isn't the force of nature it once was, he's still a top-level showman – the Andy Capp of rock'n'roll, complete with between-song patter that seems to consist of a series of unintelligible mumbles, phlegmy

CHRISTIE GOODWIN x4



TOP RIGHT: INA FASSBENDER/AFP VIA GETTY

coughs, random noise and what at one point sounds like a Tarzan impression.

The AC/DC on stage tonight are a different band to the one that crossed the finish line on the *Rock Or Bust* tour. Malcolm is gone for ever, and so, seemingly, is Phil Rudd. Stevie Young is back for his third tour of duty, 36 years after first deputising for Malcolm on the *Blow Up Your Video* tour while the guitarist dried out off the road. Then there's the new boys: 54-year-old American drummer Matt Haug, who played his first show with AC/DC at Power Trip, and 53-year-old Chris Chaney on bass, who is making his AC/DC debut. The former goes for hard-hitting power over Rudd's effortless, fag-in-the-gob snap, but it suits a venue this big. Chaney, meanwhile, has clearly been briefed on the job of AC/DC bass player, which is to hold things down in front of the wall of amps and speakers cabs at the back of the stage, venturing to the microphone twice per song to sing a backing vocal in time with Stevie Young then back-pedalling straight to the back to where he started. It hasn't been broke for the past 50 years, so why fix it now?

Yet those changes are purely cosmetic when it comes down to it. As long as there's a man in a school uniform up on stage, AC/DC remains AC/DC. Angus Young may be a silver-topped 69-year-old who isn't quite as limber as he used to be, but he's still the absolute blueprint of what a rock'n'roll guitarist should be, duckwalking through *Riff Raff* and spinning on his back like a silver-haired turtle at the climax of the extended, ever-electrifying *Let There Be Rock*. And if his mid-solo striptease is now a thing of the past, well, maybe that's one concession to age we can grant him.

Tonight's set-list is a lightly remixed version of the one they played at Power Trip, with the same songs played mostly in the same order. *If You Want Blood* and *Shot Down In Flames* aside, the first half of the 24-song set is loaded with post-*Back In Black* songs: *Hells Bells, You Shook Me All Night Long, Back In Black* itself (which sees the band rendered in black-and-white on the screens), *Thunderstruck, Stiff Upper Lip* and *Rock And Roll Train*. The new album is represented by *Shot In The Dark* and *Demon Eyes*, but sadly there's no place for *Through The Mists Of Time*, one of the best songs they've written since *Back In Black.*

'History has proven time and time again that only a fool writes AC/DC off.'

The second half reverses things, focusing on the Bon Scott years (which, amazingly, ended 24 years ago): *Sin City, Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap, High Voltage, Whole Lotta Rosie, TNT* and so on. There's nothing that anyone who has seen AC/DC previously hasn't heard them play before, but then no one's complaining, given that most people never expected to hear them again.

It's a steamrolling experience, and one that's difficult to criticise in the moment. Looking back, maybe there could have been a few more surprises in the set-list – there are people here who'd pay good money to hear *Nervous Shakedown, Shake Your Foundations* and *Heatseeker* again, or even *The Jack* once more for old time's sake. And as impressive as those screens are, they're no substitute for inflatable Rosies or giant wrecking balls.

Thankfully, the enormous bell that descends from the ceiling during *Hells Bells* has survived, as have the six massive cannons that explode from the back of the stage during the inevitable show closer *For Those About To Rock (We Salute You)*.

As fireworks explode on either side of the stage, threatening to take off the roof with them, there's a roar of appreciation from the crowd that's edged with a mix of familiarity and relief.

As the *Classic Rock* contingent heads back to our hotel, we take the long route past the High Voltage Dive Bar at the Kaue club. The lights are off, the tattooists' needles have fallen silent, and there's no sign of what's inside. But it'll be open again when AC/DC return to town for their second gig here in a couple of nights. Then it's onwards to the next venue, and the next one. What happens after this European run ends in the summer is anyone's guess, but history has proven time and time again that only a fool writes AC/DC off.

AC/DC's 50th-anniversary gold vinyl editions are available now via Sony.

THE CLASSIC ROCK INTERVIEW

ANN WILSON & NANCY WILSON
HEART

The Heart mainstays' long and eventful career has taken the two sisters collectively and individually to thin-air highs and crushing lows, in a 50-year roller-coaster rock'n'roll saga. Along the way they've made some wonderful music. And their journey continues…

Interview: **Paul Rees**

Fittingly for two self-possessed opposites, Ann and Nancy Wilson have settled about as far away from each other as is possible within the United States land mass: Ann on a fingertip of the eastern seaboard, Nancy nearly 3,000 miles to the west as the crow flies. This week in early spring, both are at their respective homes. Ann in Florida, Nancy in the verdant wine country of northern California. Ann, reading glasses perched on her nose, throaty laugh, dressed in black. Nancy, pink streaks in her hair, her black-and-white collie dog skittering about the kitchen, is more of a chatterbox than her elder sibling, just as quick to laugh. Both are good, easy-going interviewees.

They're preparing to once more ramp up Heart, the band they've piloted for 50 years. And what a journey it's been. Heady heights, plunging lows. So many indelible songs, such personal drama. Altogether, a rock'n'roll saga of epic proportions. Days from now they'll be standing on the roof of a downtown Manhattan edifice, the Rockefeller Center, blazing through Bonnie Tyler's *Total Eclipse Of The Heart* for an edition of *The Tonight Show* going out on the night of an actual eclipse. Then there's the small matter of a world tour planned to stretch for 18 months. It could be their valedictory lap, given that Ann will be 74 this June and Nancy turned 70 in March.

Ann was born in San Diego, Nancy in San Francisco. Their father, John Wilson, was a major in the US marines corps, mother Lois ran the household. The couple had a third daughter, Lynne, four years Ann's senior. The family moved around with John Wilson's postings, stations in Panama and Taiwan included. When he left the service, disillusioned with the war in Vietnam, they settled in a suburb of Seattle, Bellevue, where the sisters passed through the same school, Sammamish High. Ann graduated in 1968 and went off to art college with aspirations of becoming a fashion designer. Nancy left in 1972 and went to Portland State University to major in literature and creative writing. ▷

NANCY: © RICHARD STEEL IMAGES; INSET: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

Fender

Heart at Oakland Coliseum, California in 1977 : (l-r) Roger Fisher, Nancy Wilson, Ann Wilson, Howard Leese.

Heart circa 1977: (clockwise from left) Roger Fisher, Howard Leese, Steve Fossen, Michael Derosier, Nancy Wilson, Ann Wilson.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY x2

"Ann had the voice of doom. I was really consumed with being her accompanist."

Nancy Wilson

Throughout, the two made music together: Ann the singer, Nancy accompanying on acoustic guitar, piano and vocal harmonies. With two friends they had a four-part harmony group, The Viewpoints. While at university, Nancy performed solo acoustic sets in coffee shops and cafes. Ann joined a rock band, Hocus Pocus, alongside guitarist Roger Fisher and bassist Steve Fossen. Fisher had an elder brother, Mike, who was evading the Vietnam draft up in Vancouver, Canada.

One night, Mike Fisher snuck over the border to see Hocus Pocus play a bar called the Iron Bull in the frontier town of Bellingham. He was bowled over by Ann Wilson, and she with him – love at first sight. She followed him back to Vancouver. Subsequently, Roger Fisher, Fossen and latterly Nancy beat the same path, and by the beginning of 1974 Heart were born. By then Nancy was also in a relationship with Roger Fisher. The two sisters and the two brothers intertwined in perfect harmony. For a while, anyway.

Who were your parents to you when you were growing up?

Nancy Wilson: We came from so much military influence. Dad was in the marines corps. His brother too. Grandpa Wilson retired from the corps as a four-star general. My other grandpa was in the army. It was a real surprise when dad retired because of Vietnam. He didn't believe there was any nobility to that war. A "dirty war", he called it. We'd moved around so much as a family, we were tight-knit and in our own little bubble.

Ann Wilson: Mum stayed at home with us kids, took care of us, and the finances and all that kind of stuff. Our parents were liberal. Except for the fact we travelled to a different place to live every eighteen months or so it was a pretty normal childhood. There were hard things about it. I was never a popular kid. I wasn't like a cute blonde girl. I was really sort of an outcast. More apt to be in the folk music society than be a cheerleader.

What is your recollection of first hearing music?

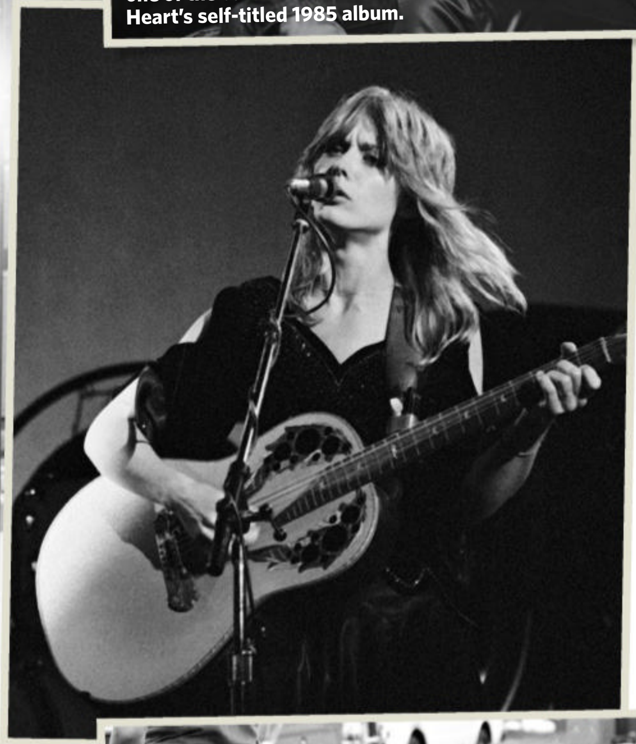
Ann: Being in the car with my dad, on the way to the hospital to see new-born Nancy. *Sixteen Tons* by Jimmy Dean came on the radio. I'll never forget hearing that song.

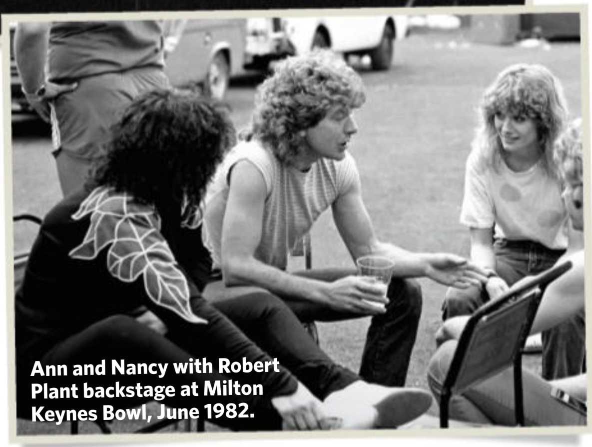
Nancy: I can remember looking through the bars of my crib and my mum singing a lullaby to me, *Curly Headed Baby*. Her voice had a round, smoky quality, kind of like Patti Page. We always had a stereo system with good speakers in the house, and a collection of vinyl. Records would always be spinning, everything from classical to Broadway musicals. James Brown and Aretha Franklin. Barbra Streisand and Ray Charles. Ann and I would do interpretive dances to scenes from *West Side Story* in the living room, jumping off the back of the couch.

Who or what inspired you to start making music?

Ann: It wasn't until high school I realised I could sing and carry a tune. I didn't ever sing solo until much later. Our father especially was really behind us when we got started with music. Mother was a little more sceptical. Two out of three daughters

Nancy and Ann with Elton John's lyricist Bernie Taupin, who was one of the outside writers for Heart's self-titled 1985 album.





Ann and Nancy with Robert Plant backstage at Milton Keynes Bowl, June 1982.

going into the entertainment business wasn't exactly her idea of a safe pastime for young girls. She just wanted us to be happy, basically. Time and again she said to us: "I'm not going to tell you what to do or be necessarily, but be blissful and do what you really love." We did.

Nancy: Our parents saw how consumed we were, so they were very encouraging. It was the neighbours, the Joneses, that said: "'Don't let Nancy play guitar, it'll ruin her fingernails." Well, they were right, but I didn't really care about fingernails. Our parents cheered us on. They helped us make payments on cheap guitars. Ann had the voice of doom. I was really consumed with being her accompanist. There really weren't any women to inspire me. I was inspired by Jimmy Page, Stephen Stills, Neil Young, Paul McCartney and John Lennon, Elton John's piano playing. They were my muses.

Ann: They were all men back then. There were a few female singers I really loved, like Judy Garland, but in those days there wasn't yet a female rock'n'roll icon. My inspirations were Robert Plant, Lennon and McCartney, Rod Stewart, Elton John, Harry Belafonte.

When did you begin performing in earnest?

Ann: I answered a newspaper ad and auditioned for these guys Roger Fisher and Steve Fossen. We drank coffee all afternoon and jammed, and they hired me. I was really lucky because I wasn't perfected as a singer at all. I was just somebody who loved to sing. I was going to Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle. I found out really quickly, in the first year, I wasn't meant to be a fine-artist. I was splitting my time between the band and school, and I'd be up all hours of the night playing with the band and then having to make an eight a.m. class. I couldn't do it. I had to choose one, so I chose the band.

Nancy: I'd walk to the Pepper Grinder bar with my acoustic guitar, a block down from the Pacific University campus in the tiny town of Forest Grove, Oregon. They had a PA and a mic. I played *Locomotive Breath* by Jethro Tull and stuff that was on the radio at the time. I once got twenty dollars for playing *Stairway To Heaven* all by myself. I had to buy my albums somehow, right? I tried to slip in a few original things too. I was working on music of my own. *Soul Of The Sea* was one of the songs I was writing at the time that ended up on the first Heart album. I was always trying to write with Ann long-distance. We'd have phone calls, and make cassette tapes to mail each other.

Eventually you joined up with each other again in Vancouver.

Ann: I went up there in 1971. I was following my heart. I fell in love. Michael had a little cottage in the woods, overlooking a creek. That was where we settled. We lived there for a good six months before the rest of the band followed me and wrecked our solitude. I wasn't pleased about it. Not at first. It wasn't my idea. I wanted the romance of just being with him in this little round house to go on for ever. Then in early 1974 Nancy joined us. She'd been coming up and sitting in with us before then, but she was serious about being in college. She was an intellectual in that regard.

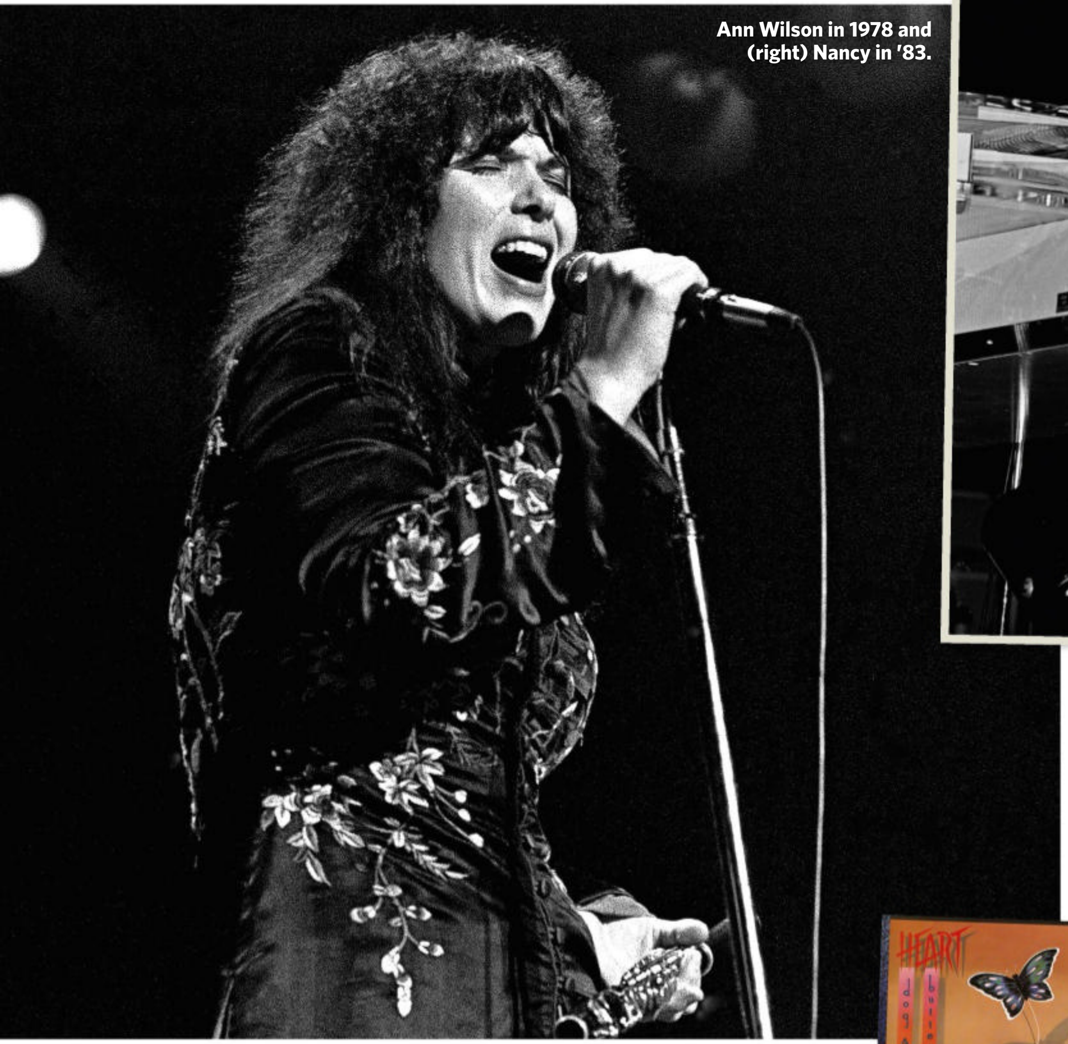
Nancy: I dropped out of college. My parents were trying to pay for it, but it was really hard for them. We learned how to play on a big stage at a Vancouver club called Oil Can Harry's. A lot happened really quickly.

Ann: I'd been in bands without Nancy for a long time, so it was just different. Nancy's a great harmony singer, and acoustic guitar player. She added to Heart what I felt it was missing – an acoustic heart. That was something Zeppelin had, and I always really valued. It made Heart vastly more interesting for me.

Was Heart effectively the Wilson sisters' band all along?

Ann: No. I have to take issue with the fact it's ⊳

ANN WILSON: CHRIS WALTER/AVALON; BERNIE TAUPIN: ROGER RESSMEYER/GETTY; NANCY: BOB RIHA, JR/GETTY; ROBERT PLANT: ANDRE CSILLAG/SHUTTERSTOCK



Ann Wilson in 1978 and (right) Nancy in '83.

"The big hair and the wild clothes. It was theatre... I loved it."

Ann Wilson

me and Nancy's band at all. The people that are in Heart are always treated on an equal footing. We don't hire back-up musicians and throw them some cash.

Nancy: Ann and I have always been the left and right hand of the same musical being. We couldn't be more different as people. She's like our dad, and I'm more like our mum. She's way more of a soldier, a warrior. We've always been like the eye of the hurricane with Heart. We've always been able to figure out how to communicate our roles as the two main leaders. Both of us together own it fifty-fifty, so we can't out-vote each other.

With Mike Fisher acting as their de-facto manager, the fledgling Heart hooked up with producer Mike Flicker, transplanted to Vancouver from LA. They began recording demos for their debut album at local indie label Mushroom Records' Can-Base Studios. Flicker, who had initially been more interested in nurturing a solo Ann Wilson, also brought two of his favoured session musicians into the line-up: keyboard player/guitarist Howard Leese and drummer Michael Derosier. At the basest level, the completed album, *Dreamboat Annie*, sounded like Zeppelin in touch with their feminine side. Powerful and whimsical by turns on two standout Wilson sisters' songs, *Magic Man,* Ann's hymn to Mike Fisher, and *Crazy On You*.

Released through Mushroom in September 1975, the album got off to a slow start, inching to 30,000 sales in Canada. A slot opening an arena show for Rod Stewart in Montreal and radio airplay over the border in the US gave it wings, and by the following year *Dreamboat Annie* had gone platinum. Without consulting his charges, Mushroom boss Shelly Siegel promoted it with an infamous full-page ad in *Rolling Stone* magazine: the album's cover artwork, the Wilsons photographed back-to-back and bare shouldered, beneath the suggestive headline: 'It Was Only Our First Time'.It was enough, along with a lack of tour support, to prompt Heart to flee to major label CBS's new Portrait imprint.

Siegel hit back in April 1977, releasing the unfinished second album Heart had been recording for him as *Magazine*, a month ahead of their official debut for Portrait, *Little Queen*. Both records went platinum. *Little Queen*, produced once again by Mike Flicker, delivered another signature track, the piledriving *Barracuda*, Ann's response to a salacious record company minion asking after her lover and meaning Nancy. The following year's *Dog And Butterfly* raced to two million sales in the US. Its centrepiece, the Zep-heavy anthem *Mistral Wind*, is both sisters' favourite Heart song.

Nothing could go wrong for Heart, it seemed. Until it did. Touring *Dog And Butterfly*, Roger Fisher's infidelities ended his and Nancy's relationship. Ann and Mike Fisher broke up at the same time. Further muddying the waters, Nancy took up with Michael Derosier. The band limped through to the end of the tour, after which the Wilsons fired the Fishers.

What stands out for you now about the making of *Dreamboat Annie*?

Ann: I knew absolutely nothing about singing in the studio on a big mic. It was going from zero to ten. Mike Flicker was my mentor. He taught me everything I know in those early recording sessions. Making a record is nerve-racking. You're under the microscope as a singer. I thought I sounded high and shrill.

Nancy: It was so intimidating to go into an actual studio. To me it seemed huge. Years later we revisited Can-Base for a radio broadcast, and it was tiny. We were so doggedly determined to be good. I think we actually pulled it off.

How challenging was it to assert yourselves as artists and be two women in a rock band at that point in time?

Ann: It was 1975. Women were thought of as sex objects, that's all. Mushroom Records decided they were going to capitalise. Two chicks and two sisters – wow! Think of the possibilities for titillation. All of that made us really angry. When we saw ourselves being treated in such a sleazy, cheesy way we totally rebelled.

Nancy: There's a little more guardrail now for the

MAIN: RICK DIAMOND/GETTY; INSET: MEDIAPUNCH/SHUTTERSTOCK

Heart in 1985, the MTV years: (l-r) Nancy, Mark Andes, Ann, Howard Leese, Denny Carmassi.

chauvinism that was so rampant at the time. I think we took it with a ton of salt – like, over the shoulder. Boys will be boys, men will be slimeballs. If you're a pretty girl, you have to endure it. But you're really there to do the work and prove to everybody that you're good. Being good had everything to do with it.

When a band lifts off, what's it like being at the centre of it?

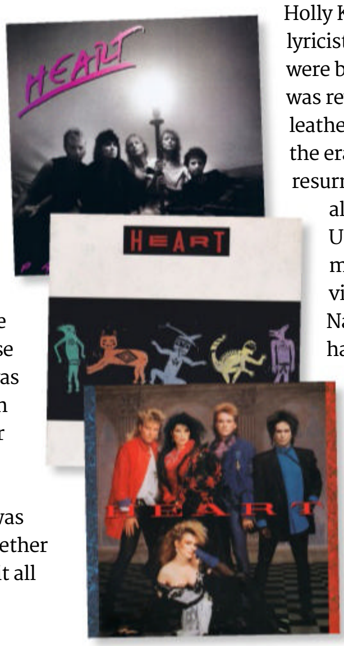
Ann: Very exciting. It seems like the good news keeps on pouring in. Pretty soon you've got money pouring in too, and everybody's buying sports cars and fur coats – at least in those days – and houses and gifts for their parents. In the early days, Michael and I bought a house and a Jaguar XKE. Those were our big 'beautiful people' expenses.

You must have had a particular nagging doubt, though – two sisters dating two brothers in and around the same band. It was bound to go wrong, wasn't it?

Ann: Oh yes, there was constant doubt. Whenever you're in a relationship with someone, the green-eyed monster is always right around the corner. You're watching to make sure he's not looking at anybody else. Being jumpy about it. They jokingly called the four of us the Wilshers. It worked for a good while. It was family. But the typical things started to eat away at the perfection of it all. People find fidelity extremely difficult. That was the undoing of the Wilsher tribe.

Nancy: In my mind it was more of a professional arrangement than a real relationship. It was easier to have someone to bunk with in a hotel than pay for an extra room. There was a communication line between the two brothers and two sisters. Those guys had started the band, and I was new to it, and Roger had a crush on me. I kind of went along with it for a while there. But still, bad idea.

Ann: We didn't have the stamina that, say, Fleetwood Mac had. It was extremely hard for us to work together as musicians. The emotional toll it all took. At that point we just needed a breather. Everything was so huge. The money, the fame, interviews. It kind of ate us.



Heart plateaued with 1980's *Bebe Le Strange*, their first post-Fishers album and their last with Mike Flicker. Then they hit the skids. Flicker's intended replacement as producer, Jimmy Iovine, fresh from working on a run of stellar albums for Tom Petty, Stevie Nicks and Dire Straits, bailed from Heart's 1982 album *Private Audition*, citing a lack of hit songs. The album sold much less than its predecessors, but better than 1983's unloved follow-up *Passionworks*.

In the interim between those two records, Fossen and Derosier were given their marching orders, and Mark Andes (Spirit, Firefall) and Denny Carmassi (Montrose, Gamma) respectively filled their slots.

After *Passionworks*, Heart left Portrait for Capitol Records. Their new label teamed them with a new producer, Ron Nevison. Outside writers such as Jim Vallance (*What About Love*), Holly Knight (*Never*) and Elton John's lyricist Bernie Taupin (*These Dreams*) were brought in, and the band's image was revamped to fit the big-haired/leather-and-lace-clad template of the era. At a stroke, Heart were resurrected. Their self-titled comeback album of 1985 went to No.1 in the US, and sold more than five million copies. The accompanying videos – Ann shot in soft focus, Nancy recast as a sex kitten – were hardly any more subtle than Mushroom's playbook had been, but got saturation coverage on the booming MTV. *Bad Animals* (1987), which included the No.1 uber-power ballad *Alone,* and 1990's *Brigade*, maintained the band's upward curve.

"I was kind of the Farrah Fawcett of rock for a minute there."

Nancy Wilson

How personally did you deal with the slump?

Ann: I partied. I bought a house in Seattle, for me and my friends, and went home. We lived a high life for a couple of years. It was a *lot of fun*. But it was not necessarily that successful creatively.

Nancy: When we got to *Passionworks*, we worked with a producer [Keith Olsen] who was hitting bottom on his cocaine habit. Everything was really hard and difficult. We were trying not to get sucked into the cocaine of it all.

The album came out, nothing happened. It was nowhere to be found. That was really hurtful. Me and Ann and our bestie Sue Ennis, who we always wrote with, got together to have a movie night. We watched *Terms Of Endearment*, then Spielberg's *The Color Purple*, and *Steel Magnolias*. It was a three-pronged cry-fest. We got out a big box of Kleenex and sat around Ann's library crying for six hours. It actually felt better after we did it. We had some wine and a nice night afterwards.

Ann: In 1983 we met this guy, Don Grierson, who was the head of A&R at Capitol. He believed that with the right songs Heart could be reanimated and brought back. He said to us: "If you give me the opportunity to go fishing for some songs for you, and you write songs too, I bet you we could have a hit record." And he was right.

How willing were you to be made over?

Nancy: We were a little desperate after the big turkey of *Passionworks*. We had to do something. It was a new era. The fashion was changing. MTV was pushing the agenda on rock bands to have big hair and 'the look'. The mind-expansion of the sixties and seventies was turning into the ego-expanded, cocaine-driven 1980s. We were not sophisticated. We were not LA people. It was not a fit, but we did okay. We got through it. I always had a joke with myself that I'd know I'd made it when I heard a Heart song in an elevator. And it

LEFT: STEVE RAPPORT/GETTY; RIGHT: AARON RAPOPORT/GETTY

Heart: still beating strong in 2024.

happened; I heard *These Dreams* in the grocery store. You feel worthy. Like you've worked really hard to do something that connected to people.
Ann: The first, self-titled album was fun. The big hair and the wild clothes. It was theatre. Having wanted myself to be a fashion designer, to have stylists heaping clothes on me was great. I loved it. By *Bad Animals* [1987] we were getting tired of it because we were touring so extensively. When you try taking these incredible costumes out into the sweaty country, where it's a hundred degrees, and you're dancing around in stiletto heels… So by *Brigade* [1990] we were over it.

Marty Callner, director of your *Never* promo, once claimed: "Everybody told me how much they loved Nancy's tits in that video." How did you square being so objectified on MTV?
Nancy: Yeah, I was kind of the Farrah Fawcett of rock for a minute there. I didn't feel like that was who I am. I'm a musician first, and I've got more to offer than some saucy-looking image of me. But I figured, okay, this is survival, and I'll be a poster girl for this if I get to go out and play my guitar. It got a little out of hand a couple of times, but who cares? I was indelibly emblazoned in the minds of many men, so I'm glad for that. I can't complain.
Ann: *Everybody* in those MTV years was objectified to death. You were expected to look like a model and be a dancer and an actor and sing. Wow. To be a quadruple threat when you're just a person from Seattle who played in bar bands. It was really hard. I thought *These Dreams* was a remarkable song. I think *Alone* also was pretty stunning. But there was something at the very soul of the music we were doing that really wasn't much like Heart. It wasn't our words we were singing, it was somebody else's.

The music business of the 80s is typically perceived as being brash, excessive and OTT. Was it that in your experience?
Ann: Oh, it was definitely excessive. Everything it's made out to be, it was. There was never enough of anything, including money. It was a very materialistic time. The dignity of women was at a low ebb. But I totally enjoyed being up on the big stages and flying around in private planes, and being entertained in these lavish ways.

On the other side of the 80s, the Wilsons returned to earth. They formed an acoustic covers band, The Lovemongers, and made a partial return to Heart's roots for 1993's *Desire Walks On*. In 1995, Nancy broke off to start a family with her husband, film director Cameron Crowe. The couple had twin boys, Curtis and Billy, in 2000. Nancy wrote scores for Crowe's films *Almost Famous* in 2000 and 2001's *Vanilla Sky*. The couple divorced in 2010. Nancy married TV music producer Geoff Bywater in 2012. Ann made a covers album, *Hope And Glory*, in 2007, got sober in 2009, and married Dean Wetter in 2015.

Ever since, with Heart they've taken a scenic route, not without its bumps in the road and pitfalls. There have been four well-regarded albums, from 2004's *Jupiter's Darling* to 2016's *Beautiful Broken* (that had James Hetfield duetting on the title track), each harking back to the electric-acoustic foundations of their 70s records.

In 2013 the original line-up was inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame by Chris Cornell. Their performance at the ceremony was the first time in 34 years that the Wilsons had shared a stage with Roger Fisher, Fossen, Leese and Derosier. The sisters had made a bigger impression in December 2012, when, with Jason Bonham on drums, they delivered an overwhelming reading of *Stairway To Heaven* at Led Zeppelin's Kennedy Center Honors bash, attended by Jimmy Page, John Paul Jones, Robert Plant and US president Barack Obama.

There have been other, tumultuous passages. On August 27, 2016, Dean Wetter was arrested and plead guilty to assaulting Nancy's teenage sons. Wetter's ire was raised by the boys neglecting to lock up his RV after a Heart show. Unsurprisingly, the sisters were estranged for two years afterwards. They reunited under the Heart banner to tour in 2019. Apart for four more years, Ann fronted her own band, Tripsitter, and Nancy went out with Nancy Wilson's Heart, in which Ann's parts were sung by Kimberly Nichole, a finalist on *The Voice*. This latest revival was heralded with a show in Seattle on New Year's Eve 2023, with Tripsitter serving as the Wilsons' backing band. Three weeks on from it, they announced Heart's Royal Flush tour.

How did you navigate yourself out of the 80s?
Nancy: I left the band to try to start a family, and it took a couple of years longer than I wanted it to. My kids were two at the time I rejoined the band. I took them out on tour with me. We had diaper pails in the bus and a nanny along. Every zoo in every large city we played, they went to.
Ann: You mean not falling victim to the emotional carnage? Well, I have a natural ability. These little red flags wave in my brain when I get to a certain point. Like with anxiety, or depression. At a point in the 90s, I realised that I needed something, so I started studying meditation. I learned basic meditation techniques. I can do myself tremendous good by knowing how to stop and be still and be mindful. It's really saved me a lot of times.

How have you maintained your relationship as sisters?
Nancy: There's been some challenges, but not hardly around *that*. It's been everything else around us. The politics and the family drama that ensues around the peaceful core. You have to expect that. It's like the movie

Ann and Nancy on US TV's *The Late Show With David Letterman* in 2014 (with the Foo Fighters).

TOP: CRISS CAIN/PRESS; BOTTOM: JEFFREY R. STAAB/CBS/GETTY

Seattle be the day: Heart's Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame Induction Ceremony in 2013: (l-r) Mike McCready, Chris Cornell, Debbie Shair, Nancy Wilson, Ann Wilson and Jerry Cantrell.

KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY

Twister. You're caught up in the tornado, and you see the cow fly by, and there goes the tractor. This is my favourite new analogy. You've got to hold on tight to something that's not going to get sucked into the stratosphere. Ann and I know how to hold to the centre. That's what we do.
Ann: With a sibling, you can get into the habit of assuming you know everything that's going on in their head. That they're not even a person in their own right. You kind of own them in a way. And then they will come out with something so completely opposite to that. That's when you realise: "Nope, this person is their own person. They don't belong to me." That's a beautiful thing, though. The distance between people must be maintained. Siblings especially fall out. They really do. Because, I think, they know their relationship is elastic. It can bounce back. There's always a way back home.
Nancy: I like to say Ann is a lot of nice people. She's a double Gemini. There's a lot of different Ann Wilsons, right? Catch the right one, and that's the one you want to be with.

When is your sister at her best?
Ann: When she's playing acoustic guitar. That's always my vote. She can make a guitar move, and come up with parts that are so cool, and so her. That's when she's at her most real. She's not thinking about herself.
Nancy: Ann's just an ingenious, funny, hysterical, driven person. She's complex. I know her sometimes better than she knows herself. So she's lucky to have me, and I'm lucky to have her. We're symbiotic siblings and somehow it works. I'm not ever sure how, to be quite honest.

Personally, when have you been happiest?
Ann: The second time I fell in love, with the man who's now my husband. I think people were laughing at me behind their hands because I was just a bubble. I was so happy and light-hearted and idealistic. Suddenly I didn't wear black clothes any more. I was in all these colours. Pretty cute, I think.
Nancy: Falling in love makes me happiest. I went to the ocean for my seventieth birthday. It was to the same cabin Ann used to have and where we wrote a million songs. Stone Gossard of Pearl Jam has it now. It overlooks the Pacific, all the way north and south. It was a glorious sunny weekend. Sue Ennis was there. Geoff was there, my soulmate and best friend. Music was all around and there was lots of chocolate involved. It was super-happy. I'll live on that one for a while.

And at your lowest?
Nancy: Lowest is loss. Losing a mum. Losing a marriage. But, you know, you find yourself dealing with that in a creative way a lot of the time. Even the greatest of sadness translates into something creative for me because that's my armour.
Ann: Maybe in the nineties when I was recovering from the eighties. I wanted to be alone and stay in the house and watch movies. I pulled out of it. I have some really good friends.

What's your biggest fault, or worst habit?
Ann: Trusting people too much. I trust everybody to be real and honest. I don't feel paranoid about people. I've been told that's a real fault. I mean, you have to be careful with people. I do think of myself as a strong person. Up to a point, and then I'll go: "Okay, no more." I will back away. I won't ever lash out, I'll just withdraw.
Nancy: It used to be a lot of worse things than I do these days. I used to drink too much. I used to smoke. I used to do drugs here and there. Today my worst habit would be laziness. I don't get off my butt enough to do the strengthening it's going to take to get through this next year and a half.

It's the opening night of the tour. You're on stage. The lights go down. What are you thinking in that moment?
Nancy: It's like the feeling of being on a roller-coaster, and going 'chink-a-chink-chink' up to the top of the track. And the moment the lights go down, that's when you're at the top. The next thing you know you're hurtling through space. I've been there before, but I never feel casual or cavalier about it, ever. It's more like: "Oh shit, here we go!"
Ann: That's when everything's okay. That's when the nerves go away. Maybe five seconds into the first song, everything's going to be fine; I mean, knock on wood. That's when you're an astronaut inside the nose cone. You're about to take off. There's nothing you can do about it. So you have to just relax, strap in and enjoy it.

For the latest information on Heart's Royal Flush tour go to heart-music.com

"I like to say Ann is a lot of nice people. Catch the right one and that's the one you want to be with."

Nancy Wilson

HIGH

The overwhelming consensus in **Black Country Communion** is that new album *V* is the best one they've made so far. Whether it will also be their last is a question far more difficult to answer, even for them.

Words: **Polly Glass** Photos: **Rob Bondurant**

Back in 2017, if you'd asked Joe Bonamassa about the likelihood of a fifth Black Country Communion album, he'd have been far from certain. At that time, the band had just released their fourth album, *IV*, and ostensibly all was going well. Critics loved it. Fans loved it. The band were proud of it. But they still had 'day jobs', outside commitments – other lives, in other words – that had always stood between them and the 'supergroup' they all loved so much. How much longer could a side project be viable?

"That was fifty-fifty," Bonamassa says now, looking back on the aftermath of *IV*. "And after [third album] *Afterglow*, that was when

FIVE

I would probably have given it a twenty per cent chance of ever firing up again. But then with the fourth record, we just started chatting and said let's do it, you know."

IV had its share of obstacles. With Bonamassa having sent up the BCC 'bat signal' (it's generally him who does this), diaries had to be finagled. They ended up with just five days to record. On the fourth day, singer/bassist Glenn Hughes had to fly to the UK to his mother's bedside (she died a couple of days later). Still, they ended up with a strong album, with standouts tracks like *Collide* and *Sway* reminding the world what hooky, meaty anthems they were capable of.

"You hear the word 'magic' a lot in this industry," Hughes enthuses, with notes of awe and gratitude that tend to pepper his answers – plus the vigour of someone 30 years sober. "But there's magic in this band. There is real magic with these four members, and Kevin [Shirley, producer], of course. I think it's magic. The albums we've made are incredible."

"But this one," Bonamassa says of BCC's now-imminent *V*, "when I first heard the mixes, I called Kevin and said: 'Am I hallucinating, or is this the best one we've done?' And he goes: 'No, this is the best one'. And I said: 'I agree.'"

Speaking separately (Hughes from a ship in Nassau, where he's just played a set of Deep Purple classics; Bonamassa backstage at

Joe Bonamassa: "You can hear the joy and the fun in the record."

Derek Sherinian: operating outside the progosphere he typically inhabits.

the London's Royal Albert Hall, where he'll play a solo show in about an hour), Black Country Communion's writing core are legitimately pumped about *V*. They make an interesting pair. Hughes is all yoga, vibes and LA sunshine; Bonamassa is straight-talk with a touch of sarcasm. But even with their own professional peaks elsewhere, they seem to hold a special attachment to Black Country Communion – an almost schoolboy-ish optimism, shared by bandmates Derek Sherinian and Jason Bonham, and Beatles-esque 'fifth man' Kevin Shirley, who brought the band together back in 2009.

"You can hear the joy and the fun in the record," Bonamassa says, sitting in his dressing room and looking very on-brand in a Gibson jumper and socks with guitars on them. "It's really groovy and it's inspired and it's fresh and it's not laboured, you know, and that's… We just kind of took all of our influences and went: "Here they are.'"

It paid off: *V* is a *brilliant* classic rock record. It emits the spirits of bygone heroes, not least Jason Bonham's dad's old band. It's consistently beefier, catchier and groovier than previous BCC albums. First single *Stay Free* made a great first impression – riffing and shimmying like a funky *Trampled Underfoot* – although in truth they could have picked almost any of the tracks to lead off with, such as pummelling opener *Enlightened* or the more tender *Love & Faith*. The expression 'all killer, no filler' feels genuinely apt.

Something clicks between the five of them. Where there was once a degree of tension over egos, and tours prevented by other commitments (most notably Bonamassa's), today Black Country Communion appears to be a harmonious club. They sit in at each other's other gigs. They have a group text, where they share "dirty jokes and Ferrari pictures" and geek out over Free. They're friends, in other words.

"We have not gotten along better as a band [than] in the last two years," Bonamassa says. "Everyone's older, wiser, more chill."

"We were all on there [the group text] last night," Hughes says. "Once a week or so, and maybe this wasn't happening ten years ago. Maybe things are changing. I just think we're all realising: 'Hey, we're still here, we just made this album, it's been seven years since the last one…' you know?"

Maybe some truths are dawning on all of them, in a way that they hadn't before: time is precious; life is fleeting; good collaborations are worth fighting for.

After a drawn-out series of diary clashes and inevitable pandemic-induced delays, there had been conversations about a new record at the start of 2022. There was just one problem, and this time it wasn't with Bonamassa's schedule. Hughes had a new Dead Daisies album and tour to complete – and, it turned out, he couldn't be in both bands simultaneously. Bonamassa suggests that this caused *V* to be pushed back "probably two years".

"Glenn's like: 'We can't do anything until I… well, bail,'" the guitarist says with a shrug. "It was a very straight thing. And when he told me he was leaving the Dead Daisies, he was like: 'Let's boogie.'"

So if the Dead Daisies hadn't been in the equation, *V* would have been done earlier?

"Well, I don't think they…." he considers his words, and grins. "It's like if you tried to bring a pineapple in from Hawaii into London Heathrow, if you know what I mean. They don't allow outsiders."

Unsurprisingly, Hughes offers a more generous perspective, singing his former band's praises and referring sincerely to "my friends in the Dead Daisies". Still, when that band's guitarist David Lowy said (in December 2022) that he'd be taking a hiatus, Hughes saw that his time with the Aussie rocker/business magnate's venture could be up.

"I said to myself and my manager: 'I don't think I can sit around for six months, especially at this time in my life,'" he says. "I think when

BCC allows Jason Bonham to be himself, not his father.

Glenn Hughes: "I can't imagine being in another band after this."

BCC's 'fifth member' Kevin Shirley (left) pulls the strings.

you're in that band, you're in there and you can't really do anything else. But I'm a man who wants to do a lot of stuff.

"And I have *so* much respect for the Daisies," he adds. "David Lowy especially, lovely man. I had a really good time in that operation. Some people think: 'Why can't Glenn stay in one band? Is he restless?' No, I just want to make new music. I want to keep working while I can."

With Hughes's Dead Daisies obligations fulfilled, work on *V* began at his house in Palos Verdes, Los Angeles,where he and his wife live with their three rescue dogs. Bonamassa came over for "five or six sessions", and the two of them came up with song ideas. At this point, 15 years into their relationship, it's a well-oiled and familiar process.

"I know where he's going to sit, I know where I'm going to sit," Hughes says. "I know what guitars we'll play. I know everything that's going to happen. It just flows. We don't over-think it. These songs come together pretty damn quick. They're all special songs, you know?"

That said, according to Bonamassa the sketches they had were "pretty basic". He was, he says, "a little concerned" as they went in to record.

In June 2023 they convened with Sherinian, Bonham and Shirley at Hollywood's Sunset Sound. Its luminary history made it an appetising choice; Led Zeppelin recorded their own *IV* in the same studio.

"It was so funny, because Jason unknowingly brought the same type of wood drum kit that his father played in studio two," Bonamassa says,

"We're a classic rock band. We're unapologetically time travellers backwards."

Joe Bonamassa

smiling, "but didn't know it until they told him, like: 'When your dad was here, it was this kit!'"

With the place to themselves and mostly rough songs to work with, they found themselves enjoying their most collaborative album process yet. The more they worked, the stronger the songs became, the happier the atmosphere was, and so it went on. *V* might have started out with Hughes and Bonamassa, but the completed record was a true team effort. Everyone thrived, not least their drummer.

"I've never seen Jason that creative," Bonamassa enthuses. "He has so many different things other than the Bonham; he's got Chester Thompson, there's Phil Collins, he's got a lot of these other flavours. I mean, can he lay down *Kashmir* better than anybody? Of course. That's in his DNA. So we still had a lot of that stuff."

But the main influence – and the band the five of them really bond over – is Free. Hughes and Free bassist Andy Fraser were pals, the latter being a huge influence on the former's bass chops. Bonamassa has said, in these pages, that if he could play guitar in any other band, it would be Free.

"Andy was a dear friend," Hughes remembers. "I remember being over at John's [Bonham] house in 1971, and I stayed over one night, we'd been drinking… And I was awakened by a child, just out of diapers, and it was little Jason! And his father and I have been playing Free all night, and a bunch of other great artists from the late sixties and early seventies."

"When we're stuck in the mud creatively," Bonamassa says, "it's always: 'What would Andy Fraser do?' 'How would [Paul] Kossoff play that chord?' 'How would [drummer] Simon Kirke play that bit?' That really kind of bonds us together.

"And we're a classic rock band," he adds. "So of course it sounds derivative. Of course it sounds like 1973. We're not trying to be like, you know, 'Here's a modern take', we're unapologetically time travellers backwards."

In a way it sounds blissful. Pure-pleasure escapism for five very busy people; the classic rock band of their dreams, with a 70s veteran at the helm. For Bonham it's a chance to be himself, not his father. For keyboard player Sherinian it plants him outside the progosphere he ▷

Four into *V*: (l-r) Joe Bonamassa, Glenn Hughes, Jason Bonham, Derek Sherinian.

typically inhabits. For Bonamassa it's a rare space for him to 'just' be a guitar player.

"I have *forty-nine* records," he says quietly, suddenly realising this. "That includes all the Black Country Communion, Beth Hart, Rock Candy Funk Party, the solo stuff, the live DVDs… As you get older you want to take a minute and, when you're ready to make something cool, do it. In terms of Black Country Communion, I went to the studio every day going: 'This is inspiring, I feel like part of something very special.'"

For Hughes, even with his extensive solo pursuits (he has a new record in the works), it's hard to shake off the feeling that he's a 'band guy' at heart. That he'd love Black Country Communion to be his full-time band.

"That would be the ideal scenario," he says, a little wistfully. "But the thing is that Joe is booked two years in advance. I am booked all the way through to the end of next year. We are talking about doing a selection of shows. Everybody I know wants to see this band, and hopefully that's going to happen."

It's easy to feel as though our enduring cultural icons will be around for ever. We know that rock's most famous faces are as mortal as the rest of us, even as some of them have a way of feeling somewhat infinite. A small number go a step further, bypassing the obstacles of age and sustaining a blistering ideal of the classic rock star – still sounding, and looking, the part. Arguably, no one embodies this more than Hughes.

"I am so grateful that I have been given this… this voice that God has given to me. I mean, how lucky am I?" he says. "I work with a physical therapist for yoga moves and postures and breathing exercises. I might be too thin, but I like to keep fit. I do take care of myself. I really do."

"I never heard anything like it in my life," Bonamassa enthuses. "He can subconsciously connect his chest voice and his head voice, and his range is unlimited. Peers? I can't think of anyone. Paul Rogers is the only one. Or McCartney. There's maybe five or six people left, you know, Peter Frampton, Ann Wilson… But the rest of his peers that sang that kind of power style, they've all come down a bit."

Still, even Hughes knows it's not for ever. He's had those thoughts. Concerns about the future, and making as much music while he can. Those moments of realising that he's 72; that time is not infinite. It's this sort of urgency that emotes through *V* in thick, groove-heavy strokes and heartfelt melodies.

> **"I don't know if there's even going to be one [BCC album]. It's a matter of: 'Is there going to be enough time?'"**
>
> **Glenn Hughes**

"I want people to know that this will possibly be the last band that I'm in," Hughes tells us. "I'm so deep into my solo career with this new album I'm about to make. And Black Country Communion to me is, seriously, a band of brothers. I can't imagine being in another band after this."

So with all that mind, will it be another seven years until the next record?

"No," Bonamassa says, shaking his head. "Because if we want this to be an active thing, we need to be active. We can't just be like: 'Oh, come see us once', and then 'We'll see in six years'. Because eventually it will just stop. Everybody still has that skill set that makes the band special. And we need to make sure that we use it while it's there."

When the prospect of live shows was raised recently, in-house they all said: "I'm in." But it's at this point in our conversation – in contrast with the clean-living glow, the full-tilt enthusiasm that's so integral to his public 'Voice Of Rock' persona – that Hughes expresses a little caution.

"I don't know if there's even going to be one," he says frankly. "It's a matter of 'is there going to be enough time?' You know how old I am, and the fact is that I want to do this for as long as I possibly can. So many of my friends have disappeared or died or retired or whatever. I am one of the last of the early-seventies gang that are still doing it. I'm not saying there *won't* be [another BCC album]. But if there's going to be one, it needs to be in the next couple of years."

Hughes, it's no surprise to learn, is one of those people who says "the word 'retire' isn't in my vocabulary". He doesn't have an exact age in mind (Bonamassa does: 62), only that he'll make music as long as he's able to do it. But there is a recognition – one that's maybe easier to sit with, at this happy point in his life – that it will happen.

"I don't want to be doing this when I'm eighty," he says. "I know there are a couple of my mates who are eighty still doing it, but I don't think I'll be doing this when I'm eighty. I don't think so."

***V* is out now via J&R Adventures/Mascot Label Group.**

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EVER MEET LEMMY?

He's mates with **Queen**, *he's worked with* **Bowie**, *listened politely to lengthy jams at* **Frank Zappa**'s *house, had bass legend* **Jaco Pastorius** *stay at his house, found out things he didn't know about his career from* **Joe Elliott**, *got a song idea from* **Bob Dylan** *complaining about the Stones... He's Ian Hunter, solo artist and former Mott The Hoople frontman, and these are some of his stories.*

Interview: **Dave Everley** Portrait: **Ross Halfin**

Ian Hunter's first brush with celebrity came in the early 1960s when he met Freddie Fingers Lee, formerly the keyboard player with Screaming Lord Sutch And The Savages. "Sutch wasn't employing him, cos he'd fallen off stage in Liverpool with a piano," Hunter says now. "He was back doing steel erecting, and I just happened to meet him in the pub. He wasn't famous in the eyes of the rest of the world, but to me he was really famous."

That fateful meeting led to Hunter and Lee starting a band. Since then the singer's journey - first with Mott The Hoople and subsequently as a solo artist – has seen him cross paths with pretty much any rock star worthy of the epithet. His two most recent albums, 2023's *Defiance Pt 1* and its new sequel *Defiance Pt 2*, feature an all-star guest list including Ringo Starr, Jeff Beck, Slash and members of Def Leppard, Metallica and Pearl Jam.

"It's funny," says the 83-year-old Hunter, "every time I meet someone who's supposed to be crazy, they're not." And he's met a lot of people, including…

MICK RONSON

I met Mick when he replaced a mate of mine, a great guitarist named Miller Anderson, in this religious thing called The Voice. I met him again on the *All The Young Dudes* record. He came in and did a Randy Newman-style arrangement on the last track, *Sea Diver*. He wrote it out on a cigarette packet, which impressed me.

He was a sweet guy, very modest. If you wanted to get him involved, arrangement-wise, you had to ask him. But there was another side to him. He knew how good he was: "I can handle anything."

We shared a room for god-knows how many tours. He'd wake up in the morning and drink last night's wine and start arguing with stuff on the TV. Apparently I used to leave water on the bathroom floor. He hated that, so he'd moan at me for that.

We worked on and off for seventeen years. People say: "How was it with Mick?" It was complex. He'd go off and do whatever he wanted to do, then he'd get fed up with that, so he'd ring me and go: "I want to do something." That's how we did it.

DAVID BOWIE

We'd made the decision to split Mott, and Pete [Overend Watts, Mott bassist] had asked him for a gig. That's when he did his thing: "You shouldn't split." He'd send flowers to every show. Our label were going: "What the fuck's going on here?"

We played the Guildford Civic, and he turned up. They were down one end of the dressing room and we were at the other, with Pete trying to be the middle man. He was different to us. He was definitely a star, he was working at it twenty-four hours a day. We weren't, we were just having a good time, that was our version of rock'n'roll. He was on a different level. But he was lovely. You couldn't have met a nicer guy.

FREDDIE MERCURY

Out of all of Mott's support bands, we got on with Queen the best. They became part of us, we became part of them. It was just like being in a nine-piece band. Fred was a character right off the bat. He was hilarious. He would say things that were extremely funny but he didn't realise they were funny. And he was impatient. Everything had to be immediate – he had to be a huge star right now. I remember him walking up and down in my room in Las Vegas, going: "When are these silly bastards going to get it?" I told him America was a big place, and they'd have to go round a couple of times. That's what they did, and of course he did become that huge star.

KEITH MOON & FRANK ZAPPA

Keith had seen Mott at the [Hollywood] Palladium, and he rang me the following morning and said: "Do you want to go out tonight?" He met me in this little Volkswagen – Keith and this lady in the front, me and a rabbit hutch in the back, for some reason. We were going to someone else's house, but they weren't in, so he said: "We'll go to Frank Zappa's."

So we wound up at Zappa's house. Zappa was an absolute gentleman. He said: "I've got this stuff on two-inch tape downstairs, do you want to hear it?" Apparently once you got trapped by Frank you could be there for hours listening to stuff with no vocals, no melody. But I didn't know this. So I'm sitting there listening to people jamming. After forty-five minutes, Zappa said: "What do you think?" I said: [politely] "Great." So he put another one on. Keith knew what was going on – he'd made himself scarce in another part of the house. Keith and Zappa both had reputations as being mad, but they were both gentlemen.

BOB DYLAN

I remember one time, me and Mick Ronson had gone to something Bowie and [Bowie's manager] Tony Defries were having in this club in Downtown New York. There was a restaurant, with a tunnel ▷

"We [Hunter and Mick Ronson] shared a room for god-knows how many tours. He'd wake up in the morning and drink last night's wine and start arguing with stuff on the TV."

Mick Ronson, Ian Hunter and The Clash's Mick Jones at the Power Station studios in New York City, February 13, 1981.

Above right: Hunter and Freddie Mercury at a Queen Party at Danceteria in New York City, August 9, 1982.

through to the club at the back. I said: "I don't want to go through there, let's stay in the restaurant." So we're sitting there, and in walks Bob Dylan and [folk singer] Bobby Neuwirth. They sit down about two tables from us, and Bob takes out his guitar and plays the whole of [his 1976 album] *Desire*, and he's overacting certain bits for fun. People are flying in to see what's happening, and we're just sitting there. We ended up going through to the club part, and all these people got up and started jamming. That was the night the Rolling Thunder Revue was born.

I met Dylan a couple of other times. One time, we were walking down the street and he had one foot on the pavement and one on the street going: "Mott The Hoople! Mott The Hoople!" There'd been a review in *Rolling Stone* where they said we were better than him. I thought he hated us, but it turned out he dug us. And I met him after a Stones gig at Madison Square Garden in 1975. They weren't on top form that night. He asked me what I thought of them, and I said: "It wasn't their best evening." And he went: "Nah, apathy for the devil." I thought: "I'm having that for a title." So I went off an wrote a song called *Apathy For The Devil* [which appeared on 1976's *All American Alien Boy*].

JACO PASTORIUS

He was wonderful. He was on *All American Alien Boy*. I met him through Bobby Colomby from Blood, Sweat And Tears. Bobby had brought him up from Florida and was inviting all these jazz guys to come round and watch him play. Jaco was like: "I don't like this, I feel like a performing monkey." So I said: "I'm making a record, do you want to come and live with me?"

He had a huge ego, but it was a positive one. He wanted to be the best bass player in the world, and he'd practise for eight hours a day at my house, which was amazing but annoying. He used to go to the top of a nearby hill and think a lot. Later on I think he replaced that with a lot of stuff that he shouldn't have done. [Metallica bassist] Rob Trujillo played on the first *Defiance* record. He said: "Oh, by the way, I used Jaco's bass." That was a nice little story.

MICK JONES (THE CLASH)

He used to follow Mott when he was a kid. He was always well dressed, he stood out. In the mid-seventies I remember someone from [Hunter's label] CBS taking me to the studio to listen to this band they wanted me to hear. It was The Clash before anyone knew who they were. I go in, and they're there. I'm standing there thinking: "What am I doing here?" So they play me this track. They asked me what I think and I say: "It's great." And then one them says: "It's the blessing." That's when I realised it was the same guy who followed Mott. For some reason the punks loved Mott. I remember going to a club in London with Mick [Ronson], and they chased him out of there. I was alright, I got away with it.

"Joe Elliott knows more about Mott than I do."

JOHN LYDON

I was on a plane once and I got a tap on the shoulder. It was John Lydon. The guy next to me swapped seats, and John sat down and we spent the next three hours talking. He'd taken over Number 1 Gunter Grove, which is where Bowie and Defries had their offices. He didn't know. It was when Mick Ronson was unwell [with cancer]. Mick was a big PiL fan, so I said to John: "Come and see Mick." He said: "I can't do that. I'll just end up saying something fucking stupid."

JOHN CALE & LOU REED

I met John through [Mountain drummer] Corky Laing. John had some studio time, but whatever he was doing fell through. The next thing, me, Corky and Mick Ronson are sitting in the studio with John, just jamming for two or three days. He was great, but he wouldn't play anything he was good at; he wouldn't play the cello or piano.

I met [Cale's former Velvet Underground bandmate] Lou Reed once. David [Bowie] wanted Mott to do *Sweet Jane* on the *Dudes* album. I had no idea what the song was about – I wasn't from Long Island, I wasn't hanging out with the Warhol crowd. So David brought Lou round to sing it. I still didn't know what it was about. He wasn't exactly the most exciting person in the world to hang out with at that time.

JOE ELLIOTT

Joe's a force of nature. In Mott, we used to let people in the back of the venue if they had no money. That's what happened with Joe. He told me it was in Doncaster.

I don't know whether he'd paid or not, but he'd basically barged his way into the dressing room. Years later, my manager got a call from their label indicating they wanted to meet me. I'd met someone like that before, I forget who it was, and I hadn't liked it, so I didn't want to do it. But when I did eventually meet Joe he was fantastic. He knows more about Mott than I do. You just have to sit back and listen to him.

BARRY MANILOW

He covered [Hunter's 1979 song] *Ships*. That was down to [music mogul] Clive Davis. When musicians came to see him who didn't write all their own songs, he had a habit of playing songs that they might like while they were having a meeting, to see if they picked up on it. That's what happened with *Ships*. Apparently Manilow's father had passed away not long before, so he asked Clive Davis what it was. I never met Manilow, but we talked on the phone. He wanted me to change the song's middle eight. He said: "My audience is composed entirely of idiots, they will not get it." I gave it a go, but I couldn't do it. Once a song is done, it's finished. Then his management came for a piece of it. My management said no way. And it still went Top 10.

In Hunter's album Defiance Part 2: Fiction is out now via Sun.

LEFT: ROBERTS/GETTY; RIGHT: RON GALELLA COLLECTION VIA GETTY

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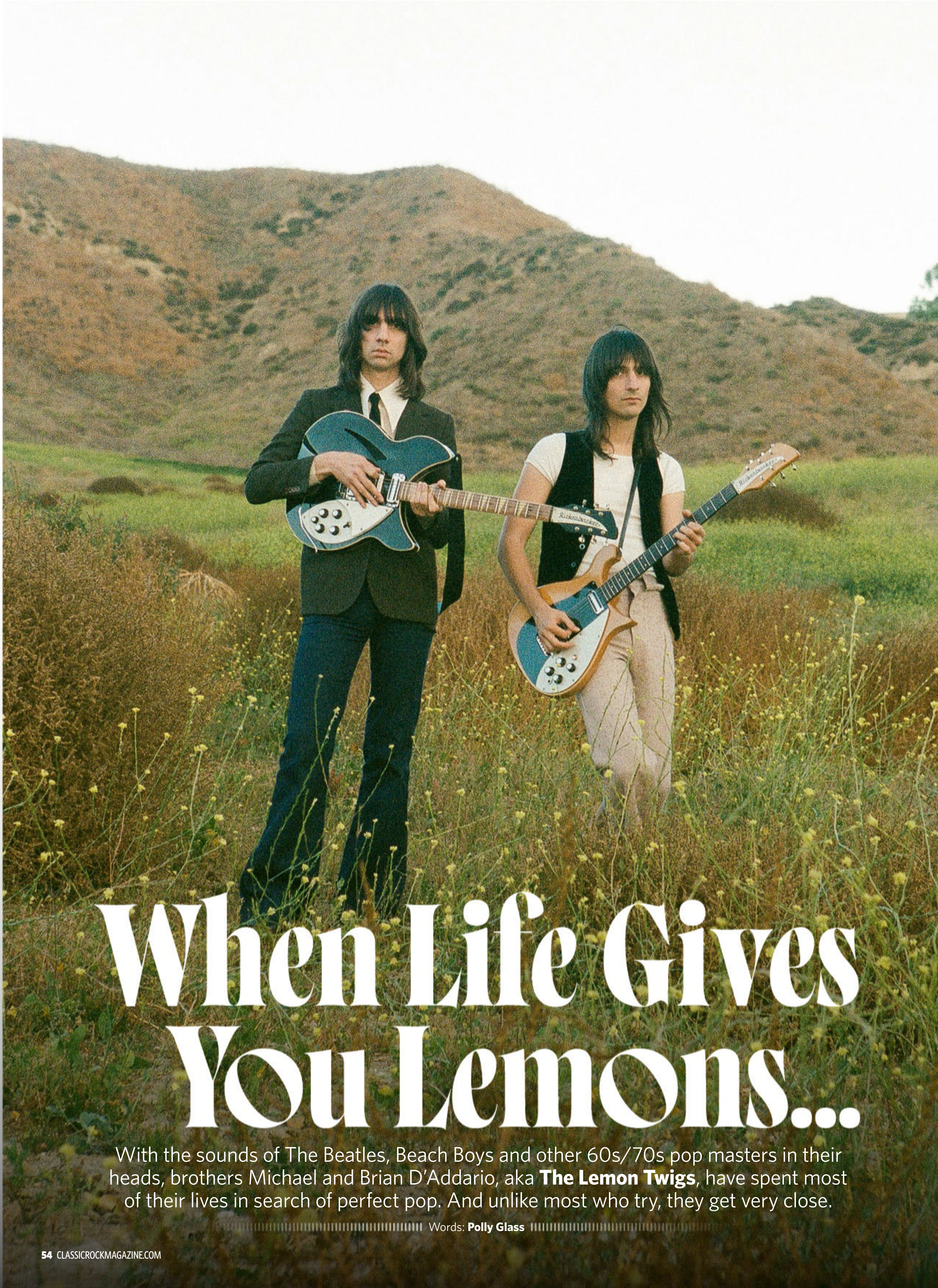


When Life Gives You Lemons...

With the sounds of The Beatles, Beach Boys and other 60s/70s pop masters in their heads, brothers Michael and Brian D'Addario, aka **The Lemon Twigs**, have spent most of their lives in search of perfect pop. And unlike most who try, they get very close.

Words: **Polly Glass**

Five years ago in Japan, The Lemon Twigs stalked the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Both bands were playing the 2019 Summer Sonics festival in Chiba and Osaka. In the hotel housing artists, crew and suchlike, the geeky, 60s-loving brother duo from Hicksville, Long Island (barely out of their teens, showbiz in their veins, precocious masters of pop rock melodies) tentatively staked out the Chilis' floor.

It turned out their nerves were unfounded. Like many other big-shots before them – and even more since, from Todd Rundgren to Iggy Pop to Jimmy Fallon – the Red Hot Chili Peppers were Lemon Twigs fans. Anthony Kiedis admired their musical chops. Chad Smith had seen them open for Arctic Monkeys at the Hollywood Bowl the previous year. It was a happy meeting.

"We kept walking purposefully through," ebullient youngest Michael D'Addario recounts, "because they had the whole second floor and all the other artists were on the third floor. So instead of taking the elevator, we kept walking up the stairs to try to catch them on the second floor, and then they were like…"

He catches himself, suddenly self-aware. "This is a bit of a self-serving story, because they were like: 'Lemon Twigs!' I was totally star-struck, because we were, you know, tweens."

You wouldn't necessarily expect such fanboying from a pair who grew up working on Broadway, rubbing shoulders with A-list stars. Not to mention a band so prodigiously assured in their own retro style – so audibly informed by the dulcet 60/70s likes of The Beach Boys, Beatles, Monkees, Turtles and Lovin' Spoonful. A band who released their debut album when they were aged 15 and 17.

"The bad part of that story, though, was that we were playing at the same time as them, so nobody showed up for our set," older, calmer brother Brian D'Addario adds. "I remember seeing somebody in a Red Hot Chili Peppers shirt looking kind of forlorn in the front row."

"I think that if even we hadn't been this kind of musician, we probably would have been in cover bands."

Michael D'Addario

The D'Addarios are friendly in a slightly chaotic way. They talk over each other a lot. They'll mock one another one minute and offer sincere praise the next. It's easy to picture them painstakingly recording lush works to tape (which they did for their sun-kissed latest album *A Dream Is All We Know*) while the studio falls into disarray around them.

"In a way we're disciplined," Micheal says. "It gets really dirty and messy in the studio, and it's difficult to work. The disciplined thing would be to clean it up, and then you could clear your mind a little bit… But then especially on the last two records, we didn't let anything fly [on record] that wasn't perfect."

Now aged 25 and 27, the Lemon Twigs have the singular, trend-averse focus of a much older group. After the initial buzz of their 2016 debut *Do Hollywood*, follow-up *Go To School* was an idiosyncratic conceptual affair about a chimpanzee that goes to high school and ultimately sets the building on fire. When that record and 2020's *Songs For The General Public* under-performed, they left their label.

Newly independent, they turned heads again with last year's *Everything Harmony*, an exquisite 70s soft-pop record with a brooding heart.

"We didn't really know what our audience was at that point," Brian explains of that (covid-induced) gig-free time. "I really like my ballads, and Michael was like: 'Well, they're your best songs, so let's build an album around those.'"

On tour, though, it was the more upbeat moments that were fun to play. It's those sounds that have now shaped *A Dream Is All We Know*. Not since Jellyfish has a post-70s band so devotedly pursued pop-rock perfection. *My Golden Years* marries gauzy West Coast harmonies with heartrending key shifts. *Peppermint Roses* is all Lennon/McCartney via Monkee Micky Dolenz. One track, *In The Eyes Of The Girl*, was co-produced by Sean Lennon in upstate New York. Otherwise it was all crafted in their new Brooklyn studio.

It's a world they've been immersed in since they could talk. Even more so as the theatre and film work of their childhood started to dry up. Unsurprisingly, school quickly fell to the bottom of their priorities.

"I don't think we felt like 'odd ones out' necessarily, but we were *very* unfocused in terms of schoolwork," Michael says. "I mean, it started off pretty good, and then it fell off because we just didn't care about it any more."

"And the acting was more like an extracurricular activity," Brian adds.

"Yeah," Michael says, "music was always the fun thing."

The D'Addarios' ambitions grew serious quickly. Their mother, a talented singer, encouraged them to sing together from a young age. Their father, musician-songwriter Ronnie D'Addario, put instruments within their reach and played old *Ed Sullivan Show* sets by The Beatles. He also recorded their early musical efforts. Go to 'My First Songs' on Brian's Bandcamp page and you can hear them for yourself. "He's like, seven, and he's playing all the instruments," Michael enthuses. "Remarkable for that age."

"Our dad would see us getting frustrated at not being able to play," Brian adds, "because we were so obsessed with The Beatles and stuff, and he would show us what we could play at that age. As we got older it was a lot of gradual, casual lessons. It was never forced upon us at all."

By their pre-teens they were making a living on stage. Brian had lead roles in musicals such as *Les Miserables* and *The Little Mermaid*, while Michael acted in the Arthur Miller classic *All My Sons*. Six days a week their mother drove them to Broadway from Long Island for rehearsals and shows.

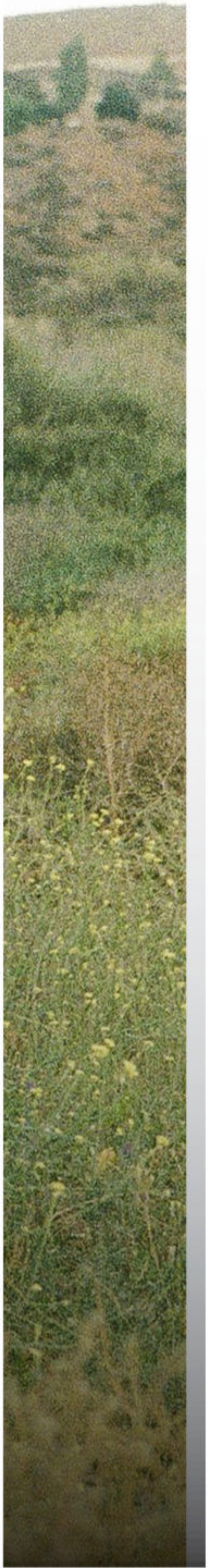
"I think they liked that I was a non-actor," Michael muses of his acting days. "I met Tom Cruise, I have a photo with Al Pacino and stuff from when I was a kid. We met way more famous people when we were kids. I was just kind of… [grins] a *cool* kid."

Meanwhile, in contrast with his current character, Brian was an excitable, hyperactive child. At one point he almost got fired from *Les Mis*. "I guess I was probably excited to be there. The lead was doing their big song, and it was during rehearsals and I, like, went behind [him] and then I was kind of mocking him," he says sheepishly, grinning."

The introspection that came with his teens is what you hear in much of the Lemon Twigs' music. Like the Beach Boys' finest hours, there's a touch of darkness in even their lightest moments. Sharp undertones and left turns. Sunny pop songs that evoke the bittersweetness of living. The sort of music you make only if you're truly in love with it, as the Lemon Twigs are.

"I think that if even we hadn't been this kind of musician, we probably would have been in cover bands or something," Michael muses. "Brian probably would have done his classical guitar, which he's very good at. He would have done lessons and performances like that. I would have been in a cover band or something like that, like a sixties cover band."

A Dream Is All We Know is out now via Captured Tracks. The Lemon Twigs' UK tour begins on August 29.



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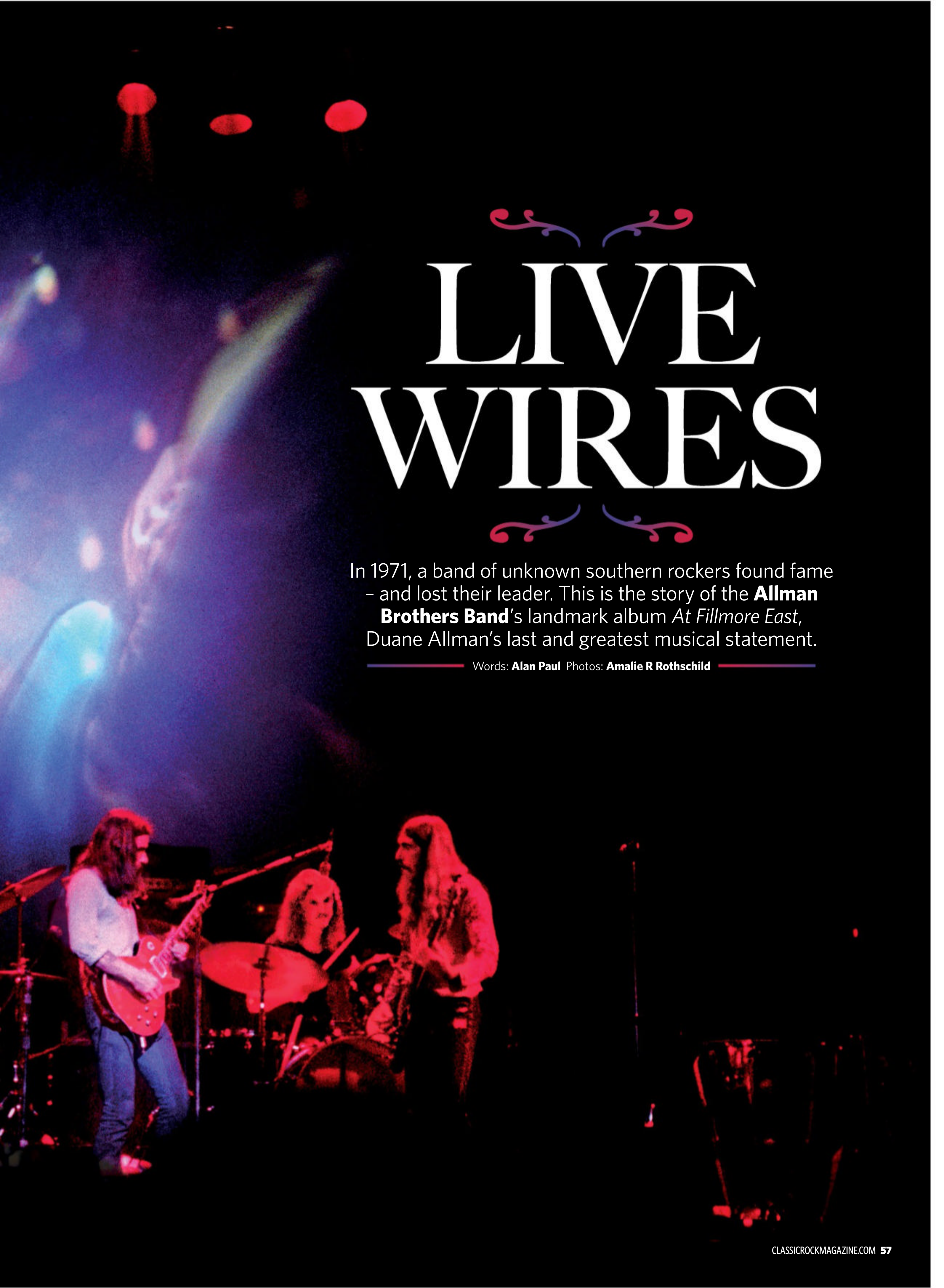


LIVE WIRES

In 1971, a band of unknown southern rockers found fame – and lost their leader. This is the story of the **Allman Brothers Band**'s landmark album *At Fillmore East*, Duane Allman's last and greatest musical statement.

Words: **Alan Paul** Photos: **Amalie R Rothschild**

THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND

The Allman Brothers Band's 1971 double album *At Fillmore East* is often, and rightly, proclaimed rock's greatest live release. More than 50 years on, it still sounds fresh, inspired and utterly original. It is the gold standard of blues-based rock'n'roll, but it's easy to lose sight of what a radical album it really was.

It took a lot of guts for the Allmans and their record label to release a two-LP live album as their third release. After all, at the time it came out the band were something of a commercial flop. Although they drew raves for their marathon live shows that combined the Grateful Dead's go-anywhere jam ethos with a far superior musical precision, their first two releases caused barely a ripple. The band's self-titled 1969 debut sold fewer than 35,000 copies, and the following year's *Idlewild South* did only marginally better despite two singles, *Midnight Rider* and *Revival.* The band struggled to understand why.

"When the first record came out at number 200 with an anchor and dropped off the face of the Earth, my brother and I did not get discouraged," Gregg Allman recalled a few years before his death in 2017. "But I thought *Idlewild South* was a much better record, and when that died on the vine I thought, damn, maybe we were wrong about this group."

But the lacklustre sales didn't match the increasingly large and rabid audiences the band drew on their relentlessly paced tours. Fans loved the Allman Brothers' rare combination of blues, jazz, rock and country, and their willingness to play until somebody pulled the plug. Eventually it dawned on the band and management that a live album was the only way to capture the group's real essence.

What resulted was a recording of two shows at New York City's famed Fillmore East, on an album that still stands as a testament to a great band at their peak. Sadly, it would prove to be the final record completed by guitarist Duane Allman, who died shortly after its release. As such it has become an epitaph for both him and the Allman Brothers Band Mk1.

"That album captured the band in all their glory," producer Tom Dowd said in a 1998 interview. Dowd, who died in 2002, was behind the board for nearly a dozen Allman Brothers albums, including *At Fillmore East*, and worked with everyone from John Coltrane and Ray Charles to Cream and Lynyrd Skynyrd. "The Allmans have always had a perpetual swing sensation that is unique in rock. They swing like they're playing jazz when they play things that are tangential to the blues, and even when they play heavy rock. They're never vertical, but always going forward, and it's always a groove."

Certainly the improvisation and length of the tracks on *At Fillmore East* was more similar to jazz than to rock, with just seven songs spread over four vinyl sides, capturing the Allmans in all their bluesy, sonic fury. *You Don't Love Me* and *Whipping Post* each occupied a full side, while *In Memory of Elizabeth Reed* clocked in at 13 minutes. Still, from the clarion slide guitar of *Statesboro Blues* that opens the album, to the booming timpani roll of *Whipping Post* that closes it, there is nary a wasted note in its 78 minutes.

Propelled upwards and onwards by bassist Berry Oakley, whose free-range style uniquely roamed the middle of the band's sound, and the rhythmic onslaught of their two drummers Butch Trucks and Jaimoe, the group seemed ready to blast off in any direction at any time. Guitarists Dickey Betts and Duane Allman spurred each other on to new heights of fretboard ferocity and creativity while pioneering guitar harmonies. Gregg Allman's authentic blues singing and surging organ vamps kept even the most ambitious jams firmly rooted in terra firma.

"There's nothing too complicated about what makes *Fillmore* a great album," Betts said in 2016 (he died earlier this year). "The thing is, we were a hell of a band and we just got a good recording that captured what we sounded like."

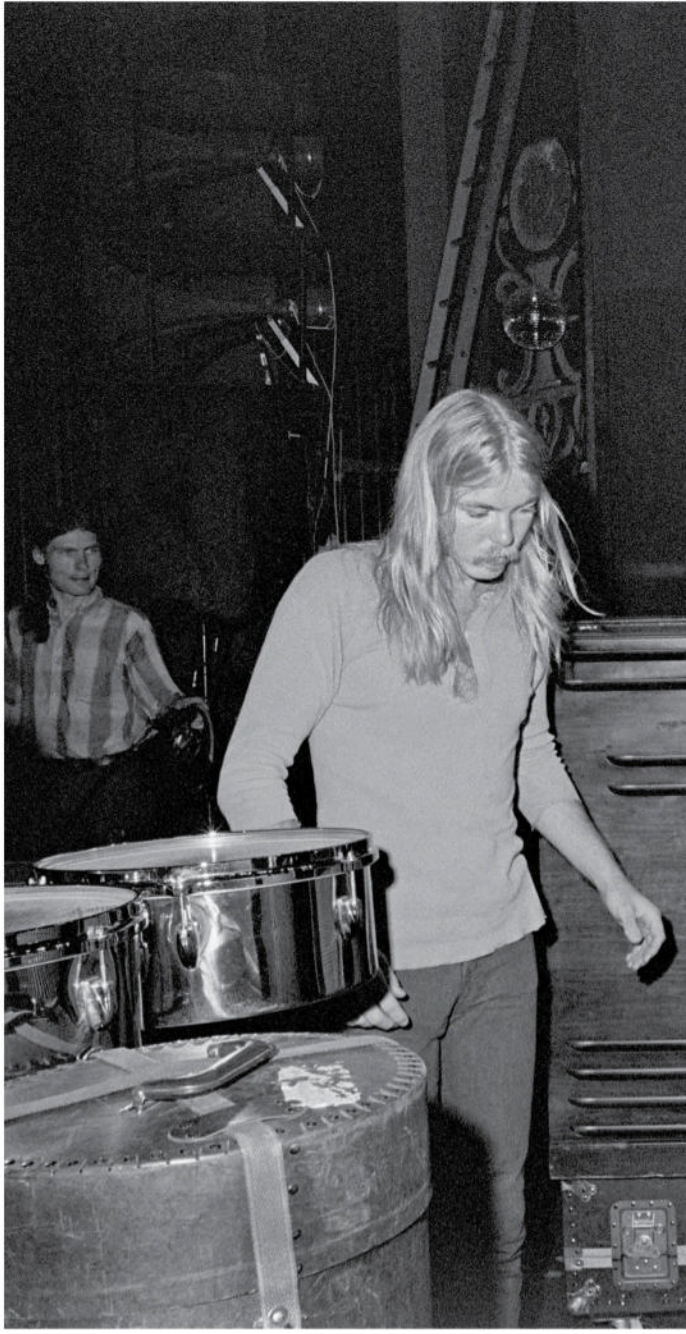
"*At Fillmore East* was both a particularly great performance and a typical night," adds Jaimoe.

To truly understand the album, it helps to recognise just how hungry and desperate the band were at the time of its release. Then-manager and Capricorn Records president Phil Walden readily admitted he had begun to consider cashing in his chips and cutting his losses.

"It seemed like I had just been wrong and that they were never going to catch on," Walden (who died in 2006) said in 1990 interview. "People just didn't grasp what the Allmans were all about musically or any other way. But they kept touring, state by state, city by city, establishing themselves as the best live band around, and building a base."

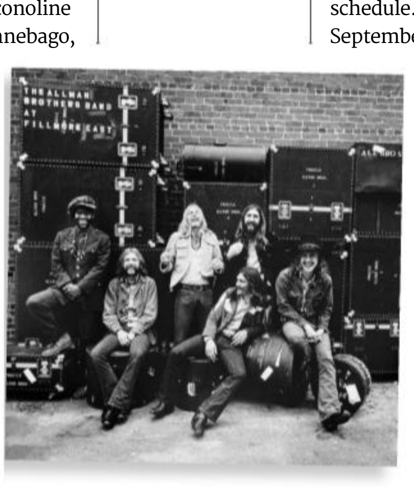
Gregg Allman said the band played more than 300 nights in 1970, with most of the off days spent travelling, a claim that seems only a slight exaggeration. As they continued to criss-cross the USA, jammed together first in a Ford Econoline van and then a more spacious Winnebago, their sound evolved and deepened. It's a process well known to the hard-core tape traders who exchange copies of these shows like so many pieces of holy grail. But there was a price to pay. "That kind of schedule puts a lot of wear and tear on your ass," Allman said.

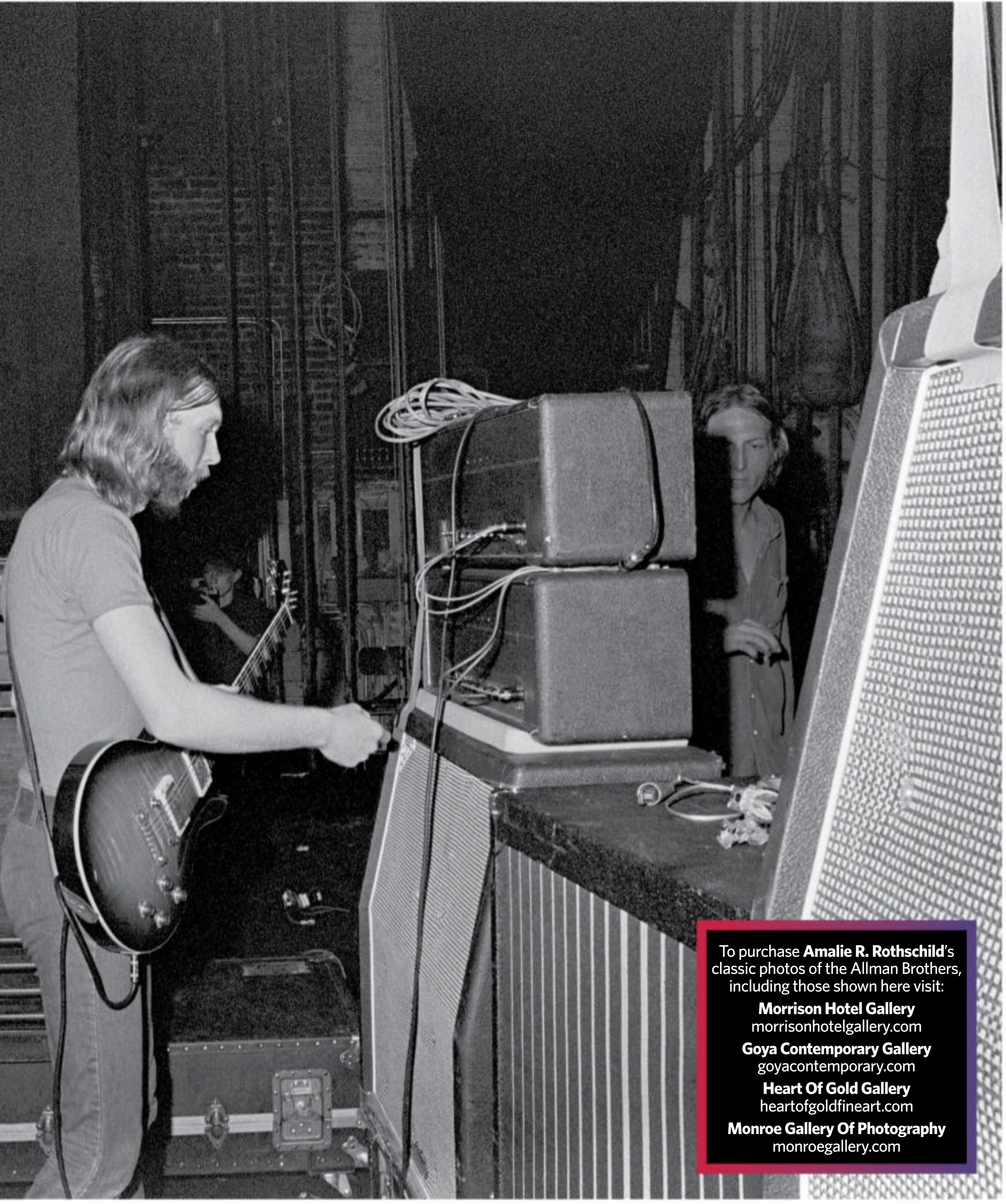
Booking agent Jonny Podell recalls: "I started booking the band in June 1969. Phil Walden said: 'Get them dates. I don't care if it's Portland, Oregon, on Monday and Portland, Maine, on Tuesday.' I tried to do a little better, but that's what we did, and they never complained. This was run like a machine, like a military unit. There were six in the band, and management provided them with first five, then six crew, making maybe a hundred dollars a night, which was pretty unusual for the time and really quite extravagant."



Something special this way comes: Gregg (left) and Duane Allman rehearse on the Fillmore East stage in 1971.

The first two weeks of September 1971, just after *At Fillmore East* was released, provide a snapshot of the band's gruelling schedule. They played Montreal on September 3 and Miami, 1,600 miles away, the following night. They had five days off, during which they went into Miami's Criteria Studios with Dowd and laid down the first tracks for Betts's *Blue Sky*, which would appear on their next studio album, *Eat A Peach* (another double). They then played September 10 in Passaic, New Jersey, the following night in Clemson, South Carolina (700 miles), and the night after that in Shippensburg, Pennsylvania





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AMALIE R. ROTHSCHILD

(1,100 miles). They then had three days off, and played in New Orleans (900 miles) on September 16.

"Don't ask me how we did it, because I don't know," the band's one-time tour manager Willie Perkins offered. "My own naïveté probably helped me, because we just did what was asked and made the gigs that were booked. But God! We used to call them 'dartboard tours', because it seemed like someone had made the bookings by throwing darts at a map. We were zig-zagging everywhere."

With all that hard touring paying off and their fan base growing steadily by word of mouth, the band decided they needed to capitalise on their concert success.

"We simply realised that we were a better live band than studio outfit, because we were always ready to experiment – off stage as well as on, I may add," Gregg explained. "And the audience was a big part of what we did up there, which is something that couldn't be duplicated in a studio. A light bulb finally went on: we need to make a live album."

Once the decision to record live was made – not an obvious choice in 1971, when live rock albums were still in their infancy – the choice of venue was simple. Promoter Bill Graham was an early and important supporter of the band, booking the Allmans repeatedly in his bi-coastal rock emporiums the Fillmore East, in New York, and the Fillmore West in San Francisco, where they established themselves as an elite band.

The Allman Brothers Band had made their Fillmore debut on December 26, 1969, opening for Blood, Sweat & Tears for three nights. Graham promised he would have them back soon and often, paired with more appropriate acts. Two weeks later they opened four shows for Buddy Guy and BB King at the Fillmore West. The following month they were back in New York for three nights with the Grateful Dead. These shows were crucial in establishing the band and exposing them to a wider and more sympathetic audience.

Something particularly special was happening between the Allman Brothers and fans in New York, which remained their most supportive audience throughout their career (they played their final show there, at the Beacon Theatre on October 28, 2014). In those dark ages of rock promotion, the Fillmores were a significant step above all other venues.

"The Fillmores were so professionally run, compared to anything else at the time," Perkins says. "And Graham would gamble on acts, bringing in jazz and blues and the Trinidad/Tripoli String Band, and he had taken a chance on the Brothers, which everyone appreciated and remembered. He never paid anyone top dollar at the Fillmore. A lot of bands went off to other promoters as a result, and Bill would feel like they had turned their back on him. But we loved playing there."

"New York crowds have always been great," said Betts, who parted ways with the Allman Brothers in 2000. "But what made the Fillmore a special place was Bill Graham. He was the best promoter rock has ever had, and you could feel his influence in every single little thing at the Fillmore."

"He called a spade a spade – and not necessarily in a loving way," Allman added. "Mister Graham was a stern man, the most tell-it-like-it-is person I have ever met, and at first it was off-putting. But he was the most fair person, too, and after knowing him for while you realised that this guy, unlike most of the other fuckers out there, was on the straight and narrow."

To record for the album, the band were booked into the Fillmore for three nights – March 11, 12 and 13, 1971 – as the middle act between opener Elvin Bishop and headliner Johnny Winter. The band and their label both wanted Dowd to produce the recording, but he was in Ghana working on the film soundtrack for *Soul To Soul*, a concert featuring Wilson Pickett, Aretha Franklin, Louis Armstrong, James Brown and Booker T. & The M.G.'s."I got off a plane from Africa and called Atlantic to let them know I was back," Dowd recalled, and [Atlantic executive] Jerry Wexler said: 'Thank god! We're recording the Allman Brothers live, and the truck is already booked.' So I stayed up in New York for a few days longer than I had planned."

"When *Idlewild South* died on the vine, I thought damn, maybe we were wrong about this group."

Gregg Allman

A mobile recording studio was parked on the street outside the theatre, with Dowd and a small crew inside. "It was a good truck, with a 16-track machine and a great, tough-as-nails staff who took care of business," Dowd recalled. "When I got there I gave them a couple of suggestions, and clued them as to what to expect and how to employ the 16 tracks, because we had two drummers and two lead guitar players, which was unusual, and it took some foresight to properly capture the dynamics."

Things went smoothly until the band unexpectedly brought out sax player 'Juicy' Carter and harmonica player Thom Doucette several songs into the first set. "One of the guys asked me how to mic the horn, and I thought he was joking," Dowd said. "They started playing, and the horn was leaking all over everything, rendering the songs unusable. I ran down at the break and grabbed Duane and said: 'The horn has to go!' He went: 'But he's right on, man.' And I said: 'Duane, trust me, this isn't the time to try this out.' He asked if the harp could stick around, and I said sure, because I knew it could be contained and wiped out if necessary."

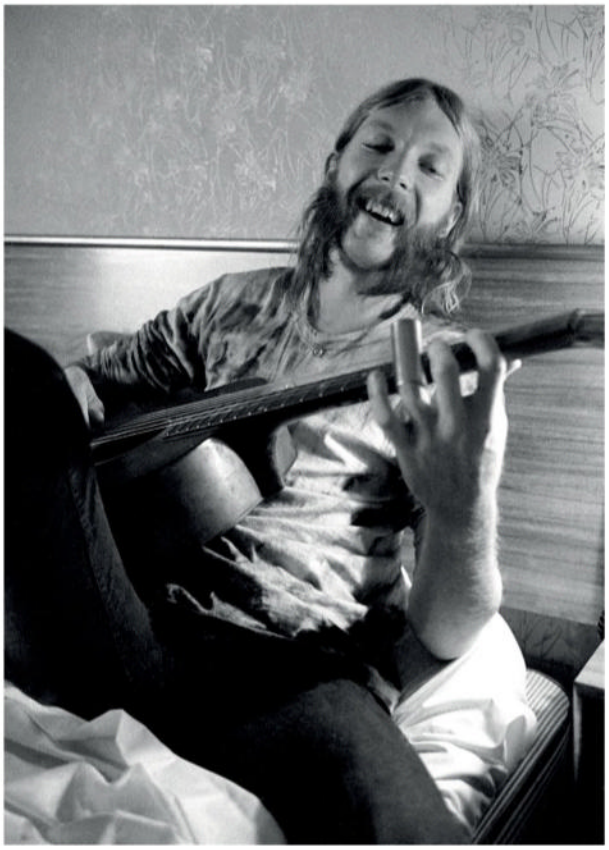
Years later, the band members insisted the horn would have worked out fine. "Juicy was playing baritone and would play basically along with the bass," Gregg Allman said. "We knew we were recording three nights, and probably just figured we'd get it the next night if it didn't work out. We wanted to give ourselves plenty of times to do it because we didn't want to go back and overdub anything."

"Dowd started flipping out when he heard the horn," Jaimoe added, "but it could have worked. There's no way it would have ruined anything that was going on. It wasn't distracting anyone, and it was so powerful."

Betts probably summed up the Allman Brothers' thought process best: "We were just having fun, and everyone dug it".

Although it was wiped from a few tracks (no one can quite remember which), Doucette's fine harp playing adds an extra dimension to *You Don't Love Me* and *Done Somebody Wrong*.

On the slide: Duane in his hotel room before the Allman Brothers' performance at the Sitar, Spartanburg, South Carolina, October 17, 1970.



"Doucette had played with the band a lot, so he was a lot more cohesive with what they were doing," the band's former tour manager Willie Perkins states. "Duane loved horns, but he would also listen to reason, and I don't think he put up any fight with Dowd."

Doucette was an old friend of Duane's who had been offered a full-time position in the band but turned it down because he didn't want it to "feel like a job". "Duane was trying to shoehorn me in there," he explains. "He and I were great friends and we really liked playing together and hanging out. I wouldn't trade playing in the Allman Brothers for anything, but they were complete. They didn't really need me, and I wasn't a joiner. I wanted my relationship with the band exactly how it was, and I asked Duane if I could do that. I said: 'I'll show up, I'll play, you pay me, we'll laugh and have fun, I'll split.'"

The harmonica player says Duane not only wanted him as a member, he also fully intended to add a horn section to the Allman Brothers' line-up.

"The plan was to bring on the horns full-time," Doucette says. "Duane would have liked to have sixteen pieces. Duane had six different projects that he wanted to do, and he thought he could do it all at once on the same bandstand."

Each night after playing, the band and Dowd would head uptown to Atlantic Records studio and listen to playbacks of the night's performance. "We would just grab some beers and sandwiches and go through the show," Dowd explained. "That way, the next night, they knew exactly what they had and which songs they didn't have to play again."

The band were thrilled just to be able to listen back to what they had played, a rare occurrence at the time. "We loved having that opportunity," Betts said. "We just thought: 'Hey, this is cool! I didn't know I did that. That sounds pretty neat.' We were just enjoying ourselves, because we would get a chance to listen to our performances. We didn't do a lot of [mixing desk] recordings, and we weren't real hung up on the recording industry anyhow. We just played, and if they wanted to record it, they could.

"We were young and headstrong," he added. "'We're gonna play. You do what you want.'"

The power of the music captured on *At Fillmore East* was in the group improvisation, the fact that six unique musical voices were expressing themselves as one complete entity. At the heart of the group's sound was Betts and Duane Allman, who reinvented the concept of two-guitar rock bands. Rather than having one player who was primarily a rhythm player backing a soloist, the group had two dynamic lead players.

While Duane Allman is probably most remembered and revered for his dynamic slide playing, he was a fully formed, mature guitarist. Betts, while often in Duane's shadow, was also a wide-ranging, distinct stylist from the start. The pair had a broad range of techniques for playing together, often forming intricate interlocking patterns with one another and/or bassist Berry Oakley, setting the stage for dramatic flights of improvised solos. And, uniquely, they often played harmonies together, a true rock'n'roll innovation that has been picked up by countless bands.

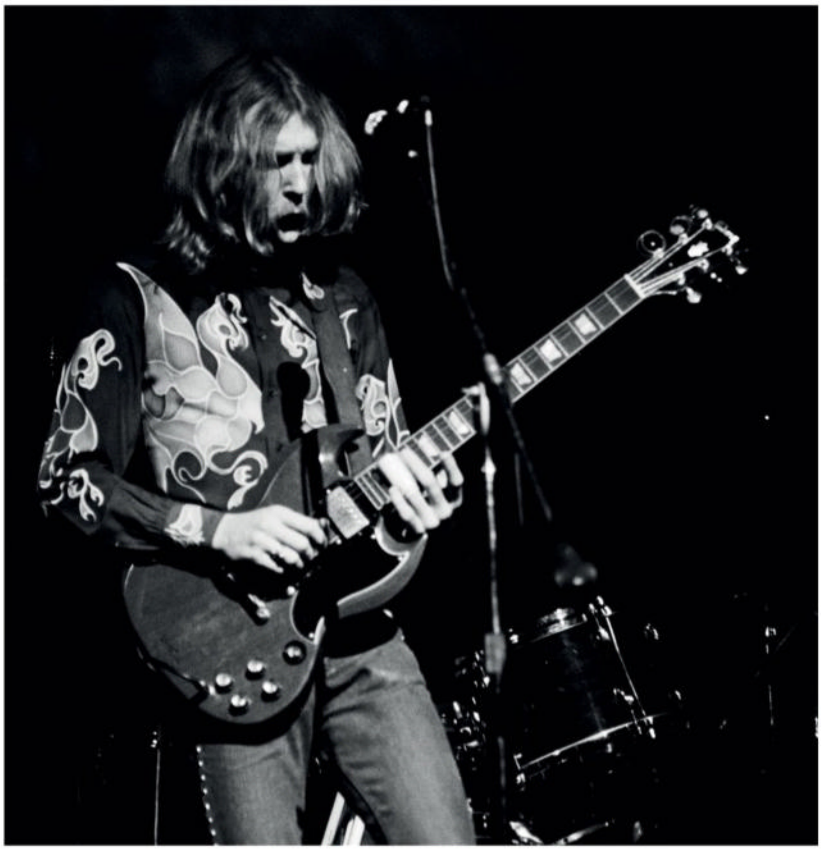
"From our first time playing together, Duane started picking up on things I played and offering a harmony, and we'd build whole jams off of that," Betts said. "We worked stuff out naturally because we were both lead players. We got those ideas from jazz horn players like Miles Davis and John Coltrane and fiddle lines from western swing music. I listened to a lot of country and string [bluegrass] music growing up. I played mandolin, ukulele and fiddle before I ever touched a guitar, which may be where a lot of the major keys I play come from.

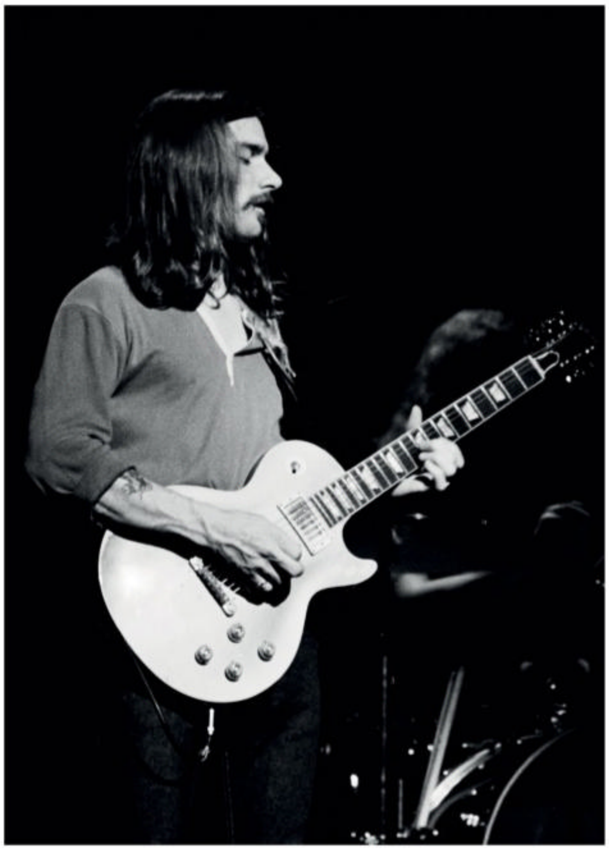
"It's very hard to go freestyle with two guitars. Most bands with two guitarists either have everything worked out or stay out of each other's way, because it's easy to sound like two cats fighting if you're not careful. But it was very natural how Duane and I put our guitars together. He would almost always wait for me, or sometimes Oakley, to come up with a melody, and then he would join in on my riff with the harmony."

The two drummers had a similarly easy and unique playing style, heard to full and perfect effect on *At Fillmore East*. Trucks and Jaimoe rarely played the same thing at the same time. Instead they played complementary parts that pushed the band to great heights and offered not only increased power but also greater depth. Trucks provided a hard-driving beat, while Jaimoe deepened the groove and pushed up against the songs with all kinds of interesting concepts and rhythms. Jaimoe was deeply rooted in jazz, and often played patterns and riffs straight off of Jimmy Cobb's work on Miles Davis's landmark *Kind Of Blue* album. He had also introduced the band to the album and to John Coltrane, both of which had a huge impact on the Allman Brothers Band. This jazz influence can be heard throughout the expansive but never long-winded playing on *At Fillmore East*.

The symbiotic relationships between the two drummers and two guitarists carried throughout the band, which functioned like one organism with a single giant beating heart. "You take any one of the six guys out and the whole thing doesn't exist," says Doucette. "This was a band of men. There weren't any kids in it, despite our young ages. We'd all worked. We'd all been on the road and taken responsibility, and it came through in the music."

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY





Duane Allman (left) and Dickey Betts with the Allman Brothers Band at Fillmore East on the venue's final night, June 27, 1971.

DON PAULSEN/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY x2

Also central to their strength and appeal was the depth and maturity of Gregg Allman's songwriting and singing. Although just in his early 20s, he conjured up the power and world-weary heaviness of the greatest blues singers.

"I knew Duane for a long time, but had never heard Gregg sing until the first time I played with the Allman Brothers Band," Doucette recalls. "Gregory starts playing that organ and singing, and I went: 'Woah.' Now here's a guy who's in worse pain than I am. He pushed all that pain into his music and combined it with his artistry into something very special and unique."

Doucette recalls another Fillmore East date when Albert King came to jam with the group on a slow blues: "He's up there in a lime-green suit, sucking on his pipe and doing his thing. Then Gregg starts singing, and Albert damn near bit through his pipe. He's never heard this voice before, and he's looking around, literally swiveling his head trying to figure out who's singing, and he sees this skinny blond behind the organ just killing it and couldn't believe it was him."

Having used only the last two nights recorded at the Fillmore for *At Fillmore East*, the band ended up with enough great material left over to fill more than half of their follow-up album, *Eat A Peach*, including the epic nearly-44-minute *Mountain Jam*, performed directly after the 23-minute *Whipping Post* heard on *Fillmore*.

"We just felt like we could play all night, and sometimes we did," Betts recalled. "We could really hit the note. There's not a single fix on *Fillmore*. Everything you hear there is how we played it."

A few months after cutting the album, the band members were in Capricorn Records' Macon, Georgia studio laying tracks when they learned that the live album was done and cover art had to be selected immediately. "We wanted to come up with something, because, left to their own devices, the people at Atlantic did horrible things," Gregg recalled. "I mean, these were the people who superimposed a picture of Sam & Dave onto a turtle [for the cover of the soul duo's *Hold On I'm Coming* album]! We wanted to make sure that the cover was as meat-and-potatoes as the band. So someone said: 'Let's just take a damn picture and make it look like we're standing in the alley waiting to go on stage.'"

Photographer Jim Marshall arrived and shot the group sitting on their road cases outside the Macon studio. "We were up at daylight to take the photo for the album cover, and we were all in a real grumpy mood," Betts remembered. "The photographer wanted us out there then, and we thought it was dumb. We figured it didn't make a damn bit of difference what the cover was or what time we took it. This dude Duane knew came walking down the sidewalk, and Duane jumped up and ran over and got a joint from this guy, then came back and sat down. We were all laughing, and that's the photo captured on the cover. If you look at Duane's hand, you can see him hiding something there. He had copped, and sat down with a mischievous grin."

> ***"Fillmore* was both a particularly great performance and a typical night"**
> **Jaimoe**

For the photo on the back of the album, the crew stood in the musicians' place, probably the first and last time roadies have ever been so prominently featured on an album cover.

"That was my brother's idea," Gregg revealed. "The crew always played a special role in our band. It goes back to the very beginning, when we lived off the disability cheques of Red Dog and Twiggs [Lyndon, tour manager]. It was like: 'Want a job? Got any money?' Putting them in a damn picture was the least we could do. They were the unsung heroes."

The crew members at the time considered themselves a part of the band. They were paid the same $90-a-week salary, and word was that Duane issued an edict that if money was tight the crew should always be paid first.

"We felt like we were part of the band," said crew member Kim Payne, one of those featured on *At Fillmore East.* "It was truly more of a brotherhood than any kind of employee/employer relationship. Everyone was equal."

Road manager Perkins: "Once, on my birthday, Duane asked for a one-hundred-dollar advance. I said: 'Are you sure? You've already taken a lot.' And he said: 'I'm sure.' So I filled out the receipt, he signed it, I gave him a hundred dollars, and he handed it to me and said: 'Happy birthday. Make sure that goes to my account and not the band's.'"

"Duane truly appreciated everybody and understood that everybody was a piece of a puzzle," Jaimoe says. "We ▷

ABB in Central Park, New York City, for the Schaefer Music Festival, July 21, 1971: (l-r) Gregg Allman, Duane Allman, Jaimoe, Dickey Betts, Butch Trucks, Berry Oakley.

JEFFREY MAYER/GETTY

all play together and every part is equally important, and that goes for the bus driver too. What you gonna do? Play all night and then drive the bus? Duane always said: 'We're all equal in this band.' And that included the crew."

Just 90 days after recording the shows there for the album, and just before its release, the Allman Brothers played the Fillmore East's last shows before it closed down. The group were personally selected by Bill Graham to be the hallowed venue's final band after he had shocked everyone by announcing he was shutting the doors for good. "He closed the Fillmore with three nights and wanted us on all three, which I though was the kindest gesture and coolest thing," Allman said.

"We were just dumbstruck when we found out that we were gonna close the Fillmore," Butch Trucks said. "Can you think of a bigger honour at that time? Everyone wanted in on that gig. The Beach Boys showed up and unloaded all their stuff and said they'd have to play last, and Graham said: 'Well, just pack up your shit. I have my closing band.' So the Beach Boys had to swallow their pride.

"The next-to-last night, we played until the morning, and we did things that we had never thought of before or since. Those are the moments that have always made this thing work."

Graham's insistence that the relatively unknown Allman Brothers must be the Fillmore East's final band must have seemed bold, even wacky, to most observers. But just weeks after the club shuttered its doors for the final time, *At Fillmore East* came was released, forever linking the band and the venue in the pop-culture pantheon. Yet the recording was almost never released in its extended, double-album form.

"Atlantic/Atco rejected the idea of releasing a double live album," Capricorn Records president Phil Walden said. "[Atlantic executive] Jerry Wexler thought it was ridiculous to preserve all these jams. But we explained to them that the Allman Brothers were the people's band, that playing was what they were all about, and that a phonograph record was confining to a group like this."

Walden won out, and was proven right when the record – 'people priced' at three dollars less than the standard price for a double album – slowly became a hit and the Allman Brothers became the most heralded band in the nation. *Rolling Stone* proclaimed the Allmans "the best damn rock'n'roll band" in the country, and by the autumn *At Fillmore East* delivered the Allman Brothers Band their first gold album.

> **"It was just unacceptable that [Duane] was gone. Unfathomable."**
> **Butch Trucks**

"All of a sudden, here comes fame and fortune," Gregg recalled. "In a three- or four-week period, we went from rags to riches – from living on a three-dollars-a-day per-diem to 'Get anything you want, boys!'"

Still, things were not easy within the band. They entered Criteria Studios with Dowd and recorded three songs in just about a week, then took a break and returned to the road for a short run of shows, ending on October 17, 1971 at the Painter's Mill Music Fair in Owings Mill, Maryland. It had been a trying few months, with drugs and the band's hard-charging lifestyle catching up with many of them, including Duane.

"Duane never stuck a needle in his arm, but he would snort heroin a lot," Trucks said. "One night in the summer of 1971, in San Francisco, Duane followed me to my hotel room and jumped in my face. He said: 'I'm pissed off! When Dickey gets up to play, the rhythm section is pumping away, and when I get up there you're laying back and not pushing at all.' I looked him dead in the eye and said: 'Duane, you're so fucked up on that smack that you're not giving us anything.' He looked me in the eye and walked out the door. I think he knew I was telling him the truth, and that's what he wanted to hear. He needed someone to tell him what he already knew. It was one of the few times I had the balls to get in his face."

"It was nuts," Doucette adds. "Everything was everywhere."

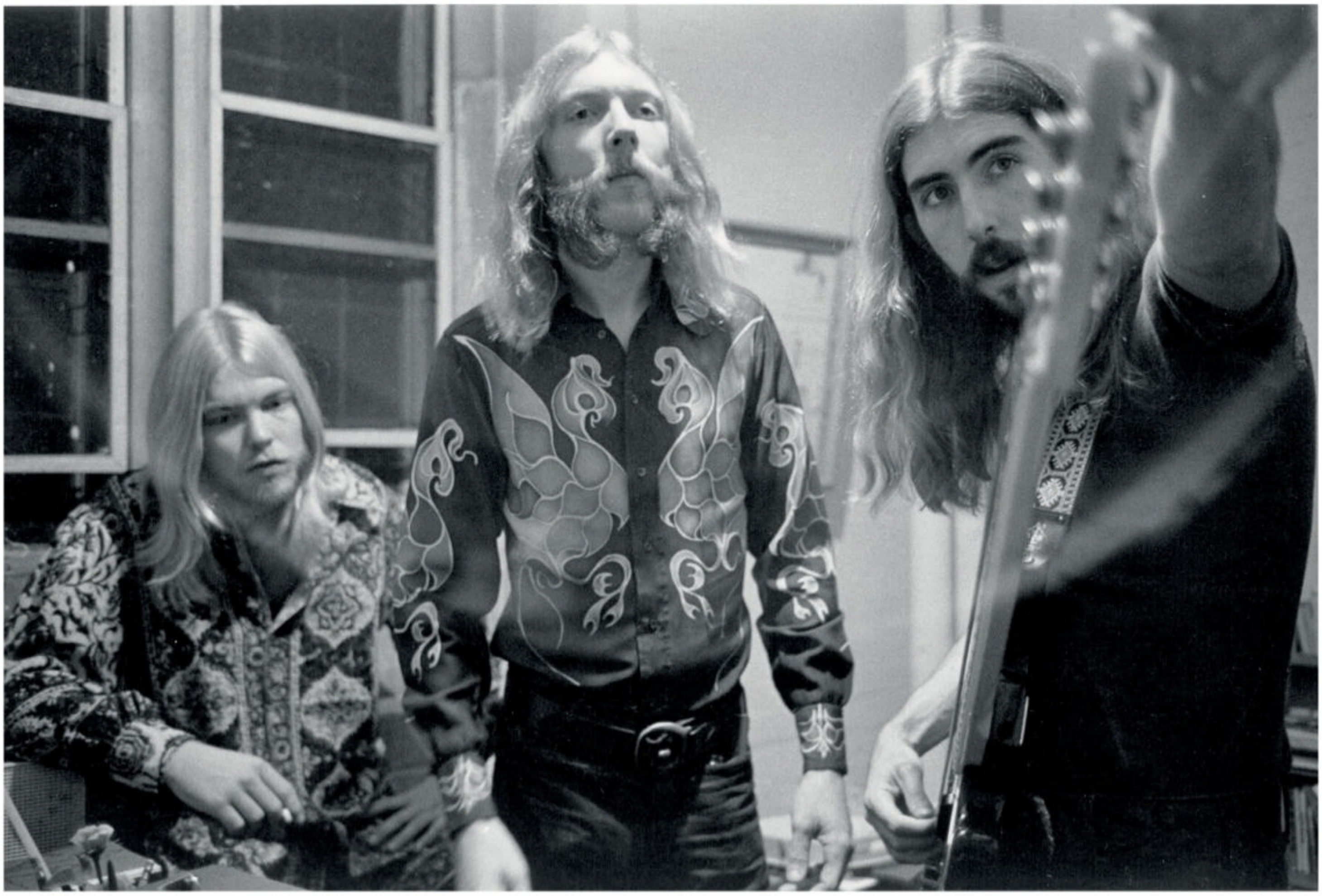
With almost everyone in the band and crew struggling with heroin addictions, Duane, Oakley, Payne and crew member Red Dog flew to Buffalo and checked into the Linwood-Bryant Hospital for a week of rehab. A receipt shows the band's general bank account purchased five round-trip tickets on Eastern Airlines from Macon to Buffalo for $369. Gregg was supposed to go as well, and a hospital receipt shows he was one of the people for whom a deposit was paid. Apparently he changed his mind at the last minute.

The group spent less than their planned week in rehab, and then checked out. Duane spent a day in New York City, visiting with guitarist John Hammond and other friends.

"He came over to my loft and we played acoustic guitars and had a blast for hours," Hammond recalls. "I so wish I had taped it! He seemed to be in really good spirits, his head clear, and excited to go on. Things were happening for them. The live album had come out and was a hit, and they were playing bigger places. Their star was rising. Which seemed exactly as it should be.

"We talked about him perhaps producing an album for me. There were all these songs that I played in my show that I talked to him about recording, and he said that he would like to be involved. There was nothing concrete, but he was talking business: what percent he would take, and this and that. I was not a business guy like that, and he was very together about the band, his finances, dealing with the business end of things. He was a very bright guy who knew how talented he was and wasn't going to take himself lightly."

Duane returned to Macon on October 28, 1971. That night, he visited Red Dog, the roadie who had been in rehab with him and whose loyalty to the guitarist was profound enough to call him an acolyte. "He wanted to make sure I wasn't going to slide back into doing heroin, to make sure I was all right," Red Dog recalled in a 1986 interview. "He sat on my couch, squeezing my arm and looking me right in the eye, and said: 'You haven't done any, have you?' I said: 'No, man.' And I fired right back on him: 'Hey, have you?'"



Gregg, Duane and Oakley prepare for the Allman Brothers' performance at the Sitar, October 1970.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

The next day, Duane called Thom Doucette in Florida to check in on his old friend. Doucette had abruptly left the band on the road and returned home because of his own struggles with addiction. He had cleaned himself up and was thrilled to hear a vitality in his friend's voice that indicated he too was overcoming his problems.

"He sounded great," Doucette says. "He jumped through the phone, with an urgency in his voice, that shouted: 'It's me. It's Duane! I'm back!' He goes: 'You doing all right?' And I said: 'Man, never better. I'm grooving and the fish are running. This is it, baby.' He said: 'I'll be down tonight. I already booked a reservation. I'm gonna ride down to the office, get my mail and get some money. We'll go fishing, and then we're going back to work.' I wasn't so sure about going back to work with the band, but I was so happy to hear from him."

Shortly after hanging up after talking to Doucette, Duane rode his motorcycle over to the group's communal home, the Big House, where they were getting ready for a birthday party for Oakley's wife, Linda. After staying there for a while, Duane got on his Harley-Davidson Sportster, which had been modified with extended forks that made it harder to handle.

Coming up over a hill and dropping down, Duane saw a flatbed lumber truck blocking his way. He pushed his bike to the left to swerve around the truck, but realised he was not going to make it and dropped his bike to avoid a collision. He hit the ground hard, and the bike landed on top of him. He was alive and initially seemed okay, but he fell into unconsciousness in the ambulance. He had suffered catastrophic injuries to his head and chest.

As word of the accident began to circulate to band members and other family friends around Macon, many people began to drift towards the waiting room at the medical center.

"I was at my house when I got the call, and I went to the hospital," recalled band friend and producer Johnny Sandlin. "I was hoping it wasn't too bad and was planning on going in to see him. Guys were ending up in the emergency room from messing around with horses or bikes all the time."

As the group gathered, someone emerged from the operating room with the unthinkable news: Duane had died in surgery three hours after the accident. The cause of death was listed as "severe injury of abdomen and head".

"It was just unacceptable that he was gone," Trucks remarked. "Unfathomable. I walked around stunned for weeks."

At his funeral, Red Dog placed a joint in Duane's pocket. Gregg gave his brother a silver dollar. Someone else added one of the Coricidin bottles Duane used as slides.

Cowboy guitarist Scott Boyer, an old friend of Duane and Gregg's, summed up the feeling of the entire band and the larger musical community: "It was inconceivable how someone that alive could be dead."

"There's not a single fix on *Fillmore*. Everything you hear there is how we played it."
Dickey Betts

Duane had lived to see the band's breakthrough coming, but was not able to fully experience it.

"We worked so hard so long to get there. Then – bam!– he was gone," Gregg Allman said. "At the time, I thought: "Shit, my brother really got short-changed, because he never quite got to see what he had accomplished. I felt that way for years, but I've slowly come to realise that he left a hell of a legacy for dying at the age of twenty-four years old. And a lot of it has to do with the *Fillmore* album. I still listen to it and I marvel at how fresh his licks are and how great his tone is. That boy was one of a kind, man, just like Oakley was. The chance that all six of us would meet up and form a band is, like, unbelievable."

Allman paused for a second to exhale a long breath and let out a little chuckle. "If you want to hear what I'm talking about, go get you that album."

The Hot List

The essential new rock tracks you need to hear this month and the bands to have on your radar

CARRIE DAVENPORT/PRESS

You want new rock? Oh we'll give you new rock. Once again confirming that our portion of the musical world is a fruitful place (*so* fruitful, in fact, that it can be difficult to know where to begin) *Classic Rock*'s Hot List returns to flag up some of our favourite new tracks and on-the-rise artists worth watching out for. We've got everything this month: bands, solo artists, 80s vibes, prog-tastic flutes, Struts-meets-Bangles pop-rock, soulful troubadour stuff, the hottest new teenage guitar star in Nashville, 'yacht doom'… (yes 'yacht doom' is real, and, as Bill Fisher proves on the page on the right, it's much more than just a funny name).

Check them out, and if you like what you hear there's a good chance they'll be playing live near you and/or releasing new music this summer.

As ever, you can check out more of the best new tracks every week at classicrockmagazine.com

Louise Patricia Crane

Tiny Bard

Ian Anderson lends his flute-tooting skills to this whimsical, deceptively smart single from fairytale songstress Louise Patricia Crane. With King Crimson's Jakko Jakszyk also joining on acoustic guitar and backing vocals, *Tiny Bard* unfurls in delicate waves of prog, folklore and prettily bittersweet melody. Oh, and it was inspired by her cat. "Animals appear throughout my songwriting on *Netherworld*," Crane says of her game-raising new album, from which *Tiny Bard* is taken (and which also finds Crane drawing from The Troubles that surrounded her childhood in Northern Ireland), "just as they do in the Brother's Grimm fairy tales, which form much of its lyrical framework". A clever, beguiling musical universe to lose yourself in.

louisepatriciacrane.com

Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats
David & Goliath

'Can I get out of my head? I don't know.' Thus begins the opening track of Nathaniel and his Night Sweats' new album *South Of Here* (released this month), a triumph of introspective Americana and melodic, mood-shifting sensibilities that channel The Beatles at their moodiest. Gorgeously sad, sweet and a thousand other little feelings, it builds from *Day In The Life*-esque keyboards into a gentle melee of soulful horn parps, ragged guitars and a steady boot-stomping beat. By the end it's not so gentle, and it's hard to know whether to be heartbroken, hopeful or both.

Masterful songwriting from a man who's seen the best and worst of life.
nathanielrateliff.com

NATHANIEL & THE NIGHT SWEATS: DANNY CLINCH/PRESS; LOWLIVES: JACK GEDDES/PRESS

LowLives *Freaking Out*

Frontman Lee Downer (formerly of metallers The Defiled) and drummer Luke Johnson (formerly of punks The Amen) are from the UK but live on the US west coast. The title track of their debut album bottles all of that, although their fondness for Nirvana is particularly apparent. A fiery, gritty, exhilarating rush of 90s alt. and grunge rage, shot through with the immediacy of prime-cut Foo Fighters, it made us want to play the full album right away – which we did, and loved it. Sure to be huge fun live, so keep your eyes peeled for dates.
wearelowlives.com

Bill Fisher *Ride On, Unicorn*

'Yacht doom' is officially a thing. Masterminded by Bill Fisher (of psych rockers Church Of The Cosmic Skull), it's exemplified on the deftly jaunty *Ride On, Unicorn*, its dark heart brightened with Meat Loaf keyboards and Brian May-esque guitars. Find more on *How To Think Like A Billionaire*, about which Fisher says: "Imagine Kate Bush and Michael McDonald wrote a yacht-doom album satirising edgelord-tech-billionaire-worship, recorded by Peter Gabriel and Tori Amos in the early 80s, using a late-90s Yamaha PSR8000 synthesiser, heavily distorted guitars, and a baby grand."
billfisher.net

The Mysterines
Sink Ya Teeth

Built on a pounding, hypnotic one-note hook and waves of 'moody party' vibes, these London rockers' new single sounds like the apex of the best late nights from your wildest days – that golden period just before the sun starts to rise, when the music and whatever you've ingested and whoever you're with feel like the only things that exist. All of which is captured in the video, as singer Lia Metcalfe explains: "Basically, [we] got our label to pay for a huge party with loads of crazy characters. It was like a fever dream. I went home eventually."
themysterines.com

The Hot Damn!
Jukebox On The Radio

Still comfortably earning the exclamation mark in their name, on their singalong new single The Hot Damn! boogie like The Struts and The Bangles bonding at a party over cocktails and a bowlful of Haribo. In other words, quality sugary fun that rocks. On the subject of their forthcoming album, from which *Jukebox On The Radio* is taken, singer/guitarist Gill Montgomery offers this calm, collected insight: "People of planet Earth! Make some space in your ear holes! Because things are about to get *spicy*! Our first love child *Dancing On The Milky Way* will be dropping into your laps this coming September!"
thehotdamn.com

The Moon City Masters
Keep Dreaming

Still crafting the kind of loose yet precise tunes that seem to glow out of the speakers, Brooklyn brothers the Moon City Masters have raised their game once again with *Keep Dreaming* – all glittery harmonies, blissed out guitar tones, and a melody that soars into particularly luscious major-minor pastures in the chorus. As ever they wear their technical prowess lightly, making for music that's clever enough to just let you enjoy it. Fun yet stirring 70s-meets-80s stuff that's had us hitting 'replay' for the past month. Find more on their new self-titled EP, which is out now.
mooncitymasters.com

THE MYSTERINES: STEVE GULLICK/PRESS; THE HOT DAMN: ROB BLACKHAM

Mother Vulture

Break Me

Easily one of the most physical, explosive live bands in rock today, with feet in metal, hardcore and Hives-y turbo-rock territory, Mother Vulture bottle that ferocity in the aptly titled *Break Me*. "Trying to 'make it' in the music industry mostly feels like you are banging your head against a brick wall," the Bristol four-piece say, "and we've been doing just that, *a lot*, very hard. We want the world to know we're not going anywhere, whether that wall breaks first, or we do."

mothervulture.bandcamp.com

Grace Bowers & The Hodge Podge

Tell Me Why U Do That

Originally from the Bay Area and now based in Nashville, 17-year-old Bowers began turning heads in lockdown when she posted videos of herself playing guitar. Since then she's landed a Gibson endorsement, performed at Eric Clapton's Crossroads festival and played for Dolly Parton. All without releasing any music. Now teamed with soulful crack squad the Hodge Podge, and John Osborne (of the Brothers Osborne) in the producer's seat, she makes a seriously funky impression with this first single – all loose syncopation, Sly & The Family Stone feel and fluid bluesy licks dotted with clever twists. Definitely one to watch.

gracebowers.com

GRACE BOWERS: GIBSON/PRESS; MOTHER VULTURE: RUSTY CREATIVE MEDIA/PRESS

And keep an ear out for...

Nate Bergman

It's been a turbulent period for the former Lionize frontman. Following his decision to fly solo as a soulful modern-day troubadour (think Bruce Springsteen packing the emotional punch of Sam Cooke – all of which is captured in his big, commanding 2022 album *Metaphysical Change* – along with streaks of country and blues), he found himself emerging from the pandemic, out on the road and, ultimately, coming to the end of a 10-year relationship. All the while he carried on touring, absorbing and writing, sowing seeds for hard-hitting music of real class and depth.

Now with a string of UK shows coming up in July – in support of rising dark folk/country/metal crossover star Amigo The Devil, along with a show at 2000 Trees festival – he looks set to reap the silver linings of those darker days, with new singles like *Back To Nashville* showcasing the sweet and heavy sides of his voice. Powerful opening statements for this next wave of his creative journey.

natebergmansings.com

CLASSIC ROCK

ON THIS MONTH'S DIGITAL ALBUM...

FOR THOSE ABOUT TO ROCK...

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This issue we've teamed up with the good people at **Mascot Records** to bring you this exclusive 12-track compilation of some of the very best sounds out there.

1 Black Country Communion

Enlighten

The third single from the supergroup's fifth album, this five-minute odyssey pings between Joe Bonamassa's beefy garage-band riff, Glenn Hughes's spooky verse, and a galloping double-time section that leaves other dream teams eating BCC's dust. "Nothing else sounds like this band," says producer Kevin Shirley, and this expansive track proves bolder ambitions than drive-time rock radio.

From *V*

blackcountrycommunion.com

2 The Georgia Thunderbolts

Stand Up

They wouldn't be the first backwoods longhairs to be tipped as the great new hope of southern rock, but their upcoming second album adds watertight evidence to the hot air, and *Stand Up* is the standout moment on it. With a lyric written by singer TJ Lyle about "overcoming an obstacle", it's a passive-aggressive belter with a loping groove that boils over into a spanky wah-wah guitar solo. You'll be on your feet, too.

From *Rise Above It All*

georgiathunderbolts.com

3 Beth Hart

Little Heartbreak Girl

God knows Beth Hart is qualified to sing about the hard times, but this sun-kissed, country-touched piano ballad feels like a transmission from a survivor checking over her shoulder to find she's finally outrun her demons. With Hart's signature rasp dialled back to gorgeous wild honey, and a chorus full of defiance, she dedicates the track to "everyone who stood by my side through it all".

From *Little Heartbreak Girl (single)*

bethhart.com

4 Masters Of Reality

Sugar

After 15 years away from the studio, we don't know what we were expecting the stoner-rock veterans' comeback single to sound like, but it probably wasn't *Sugar*. With its dream-sequence acoustic strum and Chris Goss's high, tremulous vocal, there are strong Neil Young vibes here, but the lyric makes this the Masters' most intimate moment yet. "It's a complete, emotionally based story," says Goss, "instead of my usual, covertly whispered list of what's wrong with the world's tragic trajectory."

From *Sugar (single)*

facebook.com/mastersofreality

5 P.O.D.

Lies We Tell Ourselves

Three decades after the band's formation in San Diego, only dullards still dismiss P.O.D. as 'Christian rock'. This grunge-tooled highlight from their eleventh album is a cathartic headbanger for even the most godless among us. "Everybody lies to themselves – just don't believe it," advises frontman Sonny Sandoval of a candid lyric that dares us to stare down the ugly truth.

From *Veritas*

payableondeath.com

6 Walter Trout (featuring Dee Snider)

I've Had Enough

Having bonded over social media, the blues survivor invited the shock-rocker to the sessions for this year's *Broken* album, and offered him a stompy polemic with lyrical shades of Twisted Sister's anarchic signature hit. "I knew I had to write him a song," says Trout. "So I'm thinking: 'Well, he did *We're Not Gonna Take It*. So I wrote *I've Had Enough*. I don't think the blues society is going to get into this one, but that's okay. It's rockin', big time."

From *Broken*

waltertrout.com

7 The Cold Stares

Coming Home

Having kept their birthright oblique on six previous releases, the Kentucky trio will lean into a rootsier sound on their latest album, due in September and unambiguously titled *The Southern*. Driven by a plucked resonator guitar, *Coming Home* is the most overt tip of the 10-gallon hat. "It's perhaps our most rootsy song to date," says singer-guitarist Chris Tapp. "I wrote it after a trip back to my home town, and it's about getting back to our roots and where we came from."

From *The Southern*

thecoldstares.com

8 Robin Trower (featuring Sari Schorr)

Burn

As he toasts the half-century anniversary of his classic *Bridge Of Sighs*, the master guitarist sounds ageless on this languid highlight from last year's *Joyful Sky*, free to roam the neck of his Stratocaster while the New Yorker supplies the smoke-eyed vocal. "Burn is about someone who's trying to calm down their partner," Trower explains, "and Sari is just dynamite, an absolute knockout."

From *Joyful Sky*

robintrower.com

9 Connor Selby

Love Letter To The Blues

As this playlist reminds us, Mascot's remit has roamed far beyond the blues since 1989, but the label still has an enviable knack for snapping up the genre's next big things. And on the evidence of this track, taken from his self-titled major-label debut, Essex-born Connor Selby is the one. Between his absurdly mature vocal, licks so sweet they stand comparison to BB King – and matinee-idol looks that don't hurt, either – this love letter won't go unrequited.

From *Connor Selby*

connorselby.com

10 Black Stone Cherry

When The Pain Comes

The Kentucky four-piece are one of the heaviest mobs on the Mascot roster, and the filthy saturated riffing of this highlight from last year's *Screamin' At The Sky* album serves as the ultimate primal-scream therapy. "*When The Pain Comes* is a song that talks about squaring up with your inner pain," says frontman Chris Robertson, "and not letting it control you or take you over."

From *Screamin' At The Sky*

blackstonecherry.com

11 DeWolff

Night Train

Unashamedly old-school – but infinitely smarter than the hordes of grave-robbing hipster retro-revivalists – this Dutch trio brush the mothballs off their influences to make music that sounds alive in your speakers. Deployed as a set-opener at last year's UK dates, the horn-bolstered *Night Train* nails that vintage/modern ethos, sounding genuinely like a runaway locomotive with it all kicking off in the buffet car.

From *Love, Death & In Between*

dewolff.nu

12 Kenny Wayne Shepherd

I Got A Woman

The Louisiana guitarist's recent creative streak means a sequel to last year's *Dirt On My Diamonds* is already on the cards, and if this brassy power-strut sets the bar, Vol 2 might just be the best sequel since *The Empire Strikes Back*. "To me, this is an answer song to the opening track on 2019's *The Traveler*," says Shepherd. "On that song, the guy is admiring this woman. Now, he's got her and she's everything he hoped she would be."

From *Dirt On My Diamonds (Vol 2)*

kennywayneshepherd.net

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WORDS: HENRY YATES

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MASAYOSHI SUKITA/PRESS

P82

David Bowie

Ziggy Stardust gets the box-set makeover and now shines even more brightly.

THE HARD STUFF

The Ultimate ROCK REVIEWS Section

16 PAGES

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EDITED BY IAN FORTNAM

ian.fortnam@futurenet.com

THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS

Deep Purple

=1 EARMUSIC

They're getting older and, remarkably, they're getting better again.

Deep Purple's lacklustre covers album *Turning To Crime*, in 2021, seemed to suggest that the band were finally a spent force. Then it got worse. Soon afterwards, long-term guitarist Steve Morse's noble departure to care for his ill wife meant another Purple pillar had fallen. With Ian Gillan, Roger Glover, Ian Paice and Don Airey in their 70s, nobody could have forgiven them catching up on a few *Midsomer Murders* afternoon repeats.

Instead they doubled down and knuckled down. Morse was replaced by a young pup: 45-year-old Ulsterman Simon McBride, once of Sweet Savage (who also once included Def Leppard's Vivian Campbell). They retained producer Bob Ezrin, and with their twenty-third album they've restated what made them great half a century ago. And they've done it without sounding dated. If the worst thing about an album is its idiotic title, then we're on very solid ground indeed.

The Purple of =1 harks back to both their early-70s pomp and the early-80s MKII rebirth. McBride is no Ritchie Blackmore facsimile, although the chunky opening riff to *Lazy Sod* momentarily suggests otherwise. Instead he brings relatively youthful energy, and when he lets loose on *I'll Catch You* and sizzles his way through *A Bit On The Side* it's clear he's both his own man and the right man.

Alongside McBride, the other band members are reinvigorated too. Gillan's voice is richer than it's sounded in years. And while he plays the grumpy old man from time to time (*'Give it a rest; it's not that complicated'*, he commands on the kitchen sink closer *Bleeding Obvious*), he's intermittently tender, not least on *Pictures Of You*. Meanwhile, Airey's upfront keyboards are as vital as his predecessor Jon Lord's once were.

Pace-wise, at the very moment Purple might have been expected to emulate *When A Blind Man Cries*, aside from the big ballad *If I Were You*, they gallop like *Black Night*, not least on the standout *Portable Door*, their finest moment this century.

Some frisky cooing backing vocals on *Sharp Shooter* add a new dimension, but at this point nobody seriously wants another *Purpendicular*-style curve ball. And =1 suggests they don't need one.

Just when you thought arguably Britain's finest rock band had nothing more to give, along comes what may be their final rebirth. They're taking it on the road of course. Can anything stop them? Hopefully not.

■■■■■■■■■□

John Aizlewood

Duff McKagan

Tenderness Live In Los Angeles HTTPS://DUFFONLINE.COM/

GN'R bassist scales things down on solo live double.

Duff McKagan's late-career repositioning as a heart-on-sleeve punk-rock troubadour is no surprise. Even at Guns N' Roses' imperial height, the bassist kept one foot in the Seattle dives he grew up in.

Recorded at LA's intimate El Rey theatre shortly after the release of 2019's impressive, bare-bones solo album *Tenderness*, with McKagan backed by collaborator Shooter Jennings and his band, this album is as unvarnished and unshowy as a multimillionaire rock star can get.

The 17-song set mixes *Tenderness* originals with a trio of barroom-friendly GN'R deep cuts (*You Ain't The First, Dust And Bones, Dead Horse*) and covers of songs by Seattle Supergroup Mad Season (*River Of Deceit*), The Twilight Singers (*Deepest Shade*) and The Clash (*Clampdown*). McKagan's wayward drawl is 90 per cent emotion and 10 per cent technique, and even he mocks his own acoustic guitar playing ("Shredding," he says drily at one point), but what it lacks in perfection it makes up for in honesty. *Feel* is introduced with a heartfelt tribute to dead friends and inspirations (Scott Weiland, Prince, Chris Cornell, Chester Bennington), although it's that joyously ramshackle Clash cover that captures the celebratory mood of the night.

■■■■■■■□□□

Dave Everley

Halestorm

Live At Wembley ATLANTIC

Momentous 2023 Arena show bottles lightning.

"This is a rite of passage to us. This is where our idols have played..." Lzzy Hale is clearly stoked to play Wembley Arena, and in this recording from last year Halestorm rise to the occasion.

From her paint-stripping high note to introduce *I Miss The Misery*, there's a raw, cathartic quality to their performance, and she's full of showbizzy but effective tricks to encourage her public to feel it, whether by punctuating *I Am The Fire* with an invitation to light up the room with cellphones, inviting the females in the audience to join in *I Get Off* or exhorting the faithful to do what *Raise Your Horns* says in its title, after a captivating gospel-like reading of it on her own on piano. Stomping hard rockers abound in between, traversing the band's back catalogue from early firebomb *Love Bites (So Do I)* to 2022 single *Wicked Ways*.

Triumphant stuff.

■■■■■■■■■□

Johnny Sharp

Earthtone9

Resonance Nexus CANDLELIGHT

Innovative Brit metal crew return with all guns blazing.

It's a testament to the esteem and affection people hold for Nottingham's Earthtone9 that a decade off the radar has failed to dull the enthusiasm surrounding their return. *Resonance Nexus* is their first album since 2013's *IV* – which itself was a crowd-funded comeback after an 11-year break – and it finds the Brit metal crew on fiery form.

Their artistic flair and boiling-over energy remain undimmed as they kick things off with a blast riff and a throaty howl, before a journey of intense discovery that suggests they're living right in the moment rather than resting on past glories. It's a battlefield of progressive post-metal with aggressively controlled chaos at its heart, although *Black Swan Roulette* is a moment of elegant respite – heavy, yes, but with a darkly beautiful melody allowing an intake of breath before the next onslaught begins.

The craftsmanship is masterful, each song revealing new facets with every listen, meaning that even if Earthtone9 disappear again for another decade there's plenty to uncover in the meantime.

■■■■■■■■□□

Emma Johnston

Kissin' Dynamite

Back With A Bang

NAPALM

Pucker up for explosive eighth album.

Why has it taken eight albums for Kissin' Dynamite to come up with this title? It seems like a bit of a no-brainer, really. Aptly enough, the opening title track does exactly what its title says, and surely presents plenty of pyrotechnic potential for the stage show. As a kick-off

JIM RAKETE/PRESS

detonation it couldn't do a better job, setting the scene for what the band does so well – delivering 80s-style hard rock designed to bother stadia the world over. From *My Monster* and the nostalgia-fuelled *Raise Your Glass* to *The Devil Is A Woman* and *When The Lights Go Out*, memorable hooks abound and no opportunity for an anthemic chorus is ignored. And just for a bit of variety, closer *Not A Wise Man* finds the band breaking out the acoustic guitars for a bit of a romantic singalong.

Strike a match and light that fuse.

Essi Berelian

The Folk Implosion

Walk Thru Me

JOYFUL NOISE RECORDINGS

Cult 90s Sebadoh side project reunite two decades on for underwhelming comeback.

Another pandemic silver lining: the now-or-never reunion of The Folk Implosion, Lou Barlow's 90s Sebadoh spin-off with John Davis that became a major concern after their soundtrack to Larry Clark's *Kids* gave them a breakout hit with *Natural One*.

This, somewhat muted, first album in 20 years lacks much of the Beck-like shuffle and experimental pop lustre of that early era, but boasts a mature earthy seam thanks to Barlow lacing its noirish alt.folk (*Crepuscular*, the title track), 80s-inflected crypt rock (*O.K. To Disconnect*) and melodic drone and dub experiments (*The Fable And The Fact, Water Torture*) with touches of Middle Eastern instrumentation. *Right Hand Over The Heart* even plays out to medieval beats and Cure guitars, one of several darkly political tracks counterpointing the record's deeply personal moments: Davis detailing his father's death on *The Day You Died*, and Barlow dissecting the tribulations of fatherhood on *My Little Lamb*.

Mark Beaumont

JJ Grey & Mofro

Olustee ALLIGATOR

Florida reflection.

Nine years is a dangerously long gap between albums, particularly if you're still on the rise. But JJ Grey doesn't seem bothered. Maybe he's looking at the bigger picture, as he does on evocative opening ballad *The Sea*, which conjures up a timeless, almost mystical vision of the waves lapping round his Florida home state. He then heads east towards New Orleans (musically) for a can of funk to bring to the party on his fishing boat. Straight away he has established a format for the album – ballad followed by soul stirrer – and it makes for a tight, compact album.

He keeps it local, because that is what he knows best. The album's title track describes the lightning storms that set his whole county ablaze, *Like A Breeze* and *Starry Night* look out on life with a soulful gaze, *Wonderland* bursts with energy, and *Rooster* is – how shall we put this? – cocksure.

Hugh Fielder

Lodestar

Zonen BAND CAMP

Doom for one more?

Twenty eight years between albums one and two is quite a stretch, but that's what we have here. Lodestar released one well-received album, in 1996, and called it a day in 1997. Returning to the fray with *Zonen*, the promise of their debut has blossomed in all sorts of dark and sinister directions.

Boasting riffs so massive the album is in danger of collapsing into its own black hole of doom, *Zonen* crushes from the very first rolling ignition of *Surrender To The Tide*, the pace varying from the loping, sludgy groove of *Flame* and the quiet-loud dynamic of *Hyperitual* to the brisk, crunching chug of *Bring Me The Head, High Sorrow* and *The Real World*. Closing with a rather fine cover of the Sensational Alex Harvey Band's *The Harp* is a welcome surprise and a stroke of genius.

More, please – and preferably in the next year or two.

Essi Berelian

Graham Gouldman

I Have Notes LOJINX

10cc songwriter-in-chief and pals.

Back when Manchester group The Mockingbirds were *Top Of The Pops* studio warm-ups, their manager suggested *For Your Love*, written by their guitarist Graham Gouldman, should go to The Beatles. Instead The Yardbirds made it theirs, and Gouldman's, first top-10 hit.

As might be expected from one of our foremost seven-inch single composers, the songs in this collection are similarly short and sweet. *Couldn't Love You More* begins like *Blackbird* and has McCartneyish vocals, with Ringo on drums. Rock guitar royalty includes Brian May on *Floating In Heaven*, Hank Marvin on *When You Find Love*, and Albert Lee pops up on an Everlys-inspired number. Lovelorn intrigue darkens the mood on *I'm Lazy*, a new recording of a 10cc demo from 1982. A live version of *Heart Full Of Soul* (another 60s hit for The Yardbirds) wraps up neatly where it all began.

Claudia Elliott

Within Temptation

Worlds Collide Tour – Live In Amsterdam

FORCE MUSIC

Fan-serving live album from Dutch metal linchpins.

This is Within Temptation's sixth live album in less than 20 years, and if that production approach has stripped away any magic the format once had, the music here at least stands up.

Recorded on home turf in 2022, it presents the one-time symphonic metal band as they are today: a thoroughly modern outfit whose potency is free of any lingering vestiges of cheese. Grandiose early songs *Ice Queen* and *Mother Earth* are given a 2020s glow-up, Evanescence singer Amy Lee rocks up for a impactful *The Reckoning*, while the sight of Within Temptation's Sharon den Adel waving a giant Ukrainian flag during *Raise Your Banner* on the accompanying DVD lends it a sharp relevance.

Powerful stuff, if unlikely to convert anyone at this stage.

Dave Everley

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

By Dave Ling

Remedy: an album crammed with smooth yet muscular anthems.

PRESS

Remedy

Pleasure Beats The Pain

ESCAPE MUSIC

Along with Nestor and Streetlight, Stockholm's Remedy are among the most exciting melodic rock acts to break out of Sweden over the past couple of years. *Classic Rock* fell head over heels for the "big hooks, cool vocals, crunching guitars and killer production" that made the quintet's debut so special, and had *Something That Your Eyes Won't See* surfaced earlier in 2022 it would almost certainly have ranked among that year's genre-defining releases.

Crammed to the brim with glacial-smooth yet unapologetically muscular anthems, *Pleasure Beats The Pain* offers further proof that you can't keep a good band down – especially a Scandinavian one. The sound is to die for, and *Crying Heart* and *Moon Has The Night* administer a powerful one-two punch. But unlike so many of their contemporaries whose albums flatter to deceive thanks to carefully sequenced contents, Remedy keep on going until the last notes of the whimsical ballad *Something They Call Love*.

Remedy: just what the doctor ordered.

Palace

Reckless Heart FRONTIERS

Having carved an instant, explosive, Marmite-like presence on the scene, Michael Palace describes his fifth album as "the missing link between 1985 and 2024". It's a statement of typical brashness from the Lithuanian-born Swede, who wrote all of its songs, played the instruments and handled production. Haters are still gonna hate, naturally, but disciples will dig it.

Atlantic

Another World ESCAPE MUSIC

Back in the mid-90s, Simon Harrison was a player, writer and producer on one of AOR's long-lost gems, the album *Power* by the collective Atlantic. Three decades later he's revived the name, with former Grim Reaper frontman Steve Grimmett's brother Mark on vocals. The result is an accomplished follow-up, crafted specifically for fans of Bad English, Whitesnake and FM.

Newman

Colour In Sound AOR BLVD

After venturing into more 'experimental' areas via outside projects that include the proggier sounds of Compass, singer/multi-instrumentalist Steve Newman brings a flavour of his musical wanderlust to the fourteenth album from Newman (the band). Longtime fans have no need to panic, however. *Colour In Sound* is no radical reinvention, simply a logical broadening of horizons.

Babylon AD

Rome Wasn't Built In A Day PERRIS

Still fronted by original Derek Davis, Babylon AD have been off grid since an album in 2017 and the concert set *Live Lightnin'*. A fair degree of expectation still greets the San Franciscan crew's fifth studio record, but the impact of sturdy hard rockers such as the title track and *Wrecking Machine* is gobbled up by some turkeys. A weak production doesn't help.

Redd Kross

Redd Kross *IN THE RED*

First album in five years from LA's power-pop titans.

It's been 45 years since Jeff and Steve McDonald – then aged 15 and 11 respectively – decided to throw their floppy hat into the rock'n'roll ring. However, despite influencing countless bands along the way – from Nirvana to The Lemon Twigs – their back catalogue is frustratingly sporadic, the power-pop brilliance of late-80s/early-90s albums *Neurotica*, *Third Eye* and *Phaseshifter* submerged in the grunge tsunami.

While the intervening years have been filled with all manner of intriguing side projects, the sense that the mainstream was missing out on the brothers' melodic genius became clear with 2019's *Beyond The Door*.

Their self-titled ninth studio album finds them, if anything, in even finer fettle. '*No more distractions, I hear this message coming through,*' Jeff sings in a soaring *The Main Attraction*, and, as with most eponymous albums, there's a sense of Redd Kross taking stock here, distilling their disparate influences into 18 tracks bristling with ideas and imagination. The duo's enthusiasm is clearly shared by Keith Moon-like drummer and producer Josh Klinghoffer, whose kinetic connection with Steve began when they were both in touring bands for Beck and Sparks.

So we get crunchy glam riffing (*Candy Coloured Catastrophe*), gnarly garage rock (*Stunt Queen*) and edgy new wave (*Lay Down And Die*) all laced with some deadly, score-settling lyrics. *Terrible Band* finds McDonald snarling: '*Terrible man in a terrible band!*', while *I'll Take Your Word For It* is a spiky adieu to an old rival ('*Every time you're round, I end up on the ground*'), culminating with him yelling: '*I don't need this shit!*' A discordant *Way Too Happy*, meanwhile, feels like an infuriated dig at the trope of artists gaining more critical respect the less tuneful they are, while *Emanuelle Insane* is a bad-tempered kiss-off to a fame-hungry fan ('*She dumped the leader of Kiss, because he was not fine*').

There's a break in the clouds for a Beatles-esque *Good Times Propaganda Band*, in which McDonald proclaims: '*It's a rare, rather luxury show, for the few who are in the know*', while a frenzied *Simple Magic* is a meta celebration of pop structure in which he declares: '*We can live in harmony.*' A final *Born Innocent*, meanwhile (also the title of the band documentary released this year) finds them reminiscing about their days in a school band.

It's taken almost half a century, but Redd Kross have finally come full circle.

Paul Moody

Robert Jon & The Wreck

Red Moon Rising *JOURNEYMAN*

Californian quintet sound sure of themselves on vibrant latest album.

Post-pandemic, not many bands on the planet have been more prolific on stage and off than Robert Jon's southern-rock brotherhood. Like attracts like, and now they're signed to Joe Bonamassa's label, with this album benefitting from a typically rich Kevin Shirley production.

Frontman Burrison (Robert Jon) has said that the album's title represents rebirth and change, and he's got a point. The band's trademark, toe-tapping opines on femmes fatale are still here in the form of *Stone Cold Killer* and *Trouble*, but the band are inclined to tread some roads less travelled. The title track is super-funky, while *Dragging Me Down*'s sullen stoner riffs lurch towards an explosive, power-pose guitar solo. The charming, piano-driven *Help Yourself* is ready made for an Elton John verse or two.

While there's no doubting these Californians' identity, *Red Moon Rising* splashes new colours on their sonic palette with assured flair.

Chris Lord

Cavalera

Schizophrenia *NUCLEAR BLAST*

Max and Iggor take another brutal trip into the past.

Re-recording classic albums is always a risky business, but few have done it as convincingly as Max and Iggor Cavalera.

As with last year's fresh takes on *Bestial Devastation* and *Morbid Visions*, the Brazilian brothers have revisited their old band Sepultura's second full-length record and given it an eyeball-dislodging kick up the arse.

Schizophrenia, the moment when the band's primitive death metal began to take a more accessible (but no less brutal) shape, is widely regarded as a stone-cold classic and a seminal piece of underground metal art. More importantly, it is an ugly, snarling, snot-encrusted bastard of an album that arguably would not survive being remade with anyone but Max and Iggor in charge. These new versions are arguably played more precisely than the originals, but in every other respect they match the youthful intensity of 37 years ago. Scabrous, filthy and rabid, the likes of *Escape To The Void* and *Septic Schizo* now have even more power to wreck necks and crush skulls.

Dom Lawson

Joanne Shaw Taylor

Heavy Soul *JOURNEYMAN*

Soulful blues rocker matures without mellowing.

Joanne Shaw Taylor's soulful vocals and lead guitar style drew praise from Annie Lennox and Stevie Wonder at the outset of her career, but she's earned her stripes the old-school way, putting in the hard yards on the road and in the studio. That said, there's nothing workmanlike about her song-focused approach to the blues, invigorated on *Heavy Soul* by the self-imposed challenge of attempting to blend the soul-pop direction of *Nobody's Fool* (2022) with her blues roots. Such an experiment could miss both targets, but Shaw Taylor achieves a seamless fusion that's a natural fit for her smoky vocal tone and stinging, articulate lead guitar lines, shading the blues-informed chord sequences of 10 filler-free songs with Motown-style beats (*Drowning In A Sea Of Love*) and gospel backing singers (*Sweet Lil' Lies, Wild Love*).

Heavy Soul strikes a winning balance between maturity and raw, gut-punch blues.

Rich Davenport

Alan Vega

Insurrection *IN THE RED*

Posthumous release of tracks recorded in late 90s by Suicide frontman.

Produced in collaboration with Liz Lamere and Jared Artaud, these recordings capture Alan Vega in a state of post-Gulf War turmoil, anticipating some impending catastrophe to hit New York, not long before it actually did in the form of 9/11. Tracks like *Invasion*, driven by the migraine thud of a bass drum, are remorselessly repetitive. *Cyanide Soul* and *Murder One* feel like efforts to re-evoke the hellscape of *Frankie Teardrop* - a similar rapid-fire BPM, similar dark, swirling

WANDA MARTIN/PRESS

atmospherics. Vega acts as a sort of totem of jet-black dystopian modernity, dishing it out lyrically, absorbing it physically. *Genocide* is cruelly apt, *Jet Lord* industrial to the point of abstraction. Vega at times feels engulfed, incinerated by the electronic forces unleashed here, his voice at times low in the mix.

Twenty-five years on, this feels like a roar from the grave.

David Stubbs

The Commoners
Restless GYPSY SOULS

Canadian roots rockers deliver the songs and the swagger.

Granted it's a time-worn theory, but the best songs are the ones a band or artist writes for themselves.

Take *Restless*, The Commoners' third album. The Toronto band's latest is loaded with the kind of stellar songwriting that's achievable only with a sincere love for the genre. *The Way I Am* and *Shake You Off* lead with sharp, swaggering riffs that rollick with southern-fried abandon – both a must for summer playlists – while lead guitarist Ross Hayes Citrullo is devastatingly good on *Body And Soul*. The Black Crowes' influence is abundant throughout, and you're never too far from a fruity organ, but on *See You Again* frontman Chris Medhurst swaps his bluesy preacherman shtick for soul-infused storyteller.

United by an honest rock'n'roll conviction, *Restless* is that great record we all want to hear: a band simply doing their thing and doing it extremely well.

Chris Lord

Battlesnake
The Rise And Demise Of The Motorsteeple

SELF-RELEASED

Mad Max joins some crazy church. Rock'n'roll results.

Some might look at the satin robes, the keytar, the songs about pterodactyl firehawks (whatever they are) and think this is some kind of joke. Well, I'm here to tell you that Battlesnake might be a lot of things, but phony rock'n'roll is not one of them. This Aussie seven-piece throw Queen, Ghost, Gwar, King Gizzard and Cheech And Chong's band from *Up In Smoke* into a meat grinder and create some of the tastiest rock sausage you'll hear all year.

The glorious but unlikely tale of a tank that is also a church, *Motorsteeple* is just the kind of nonsensical concept album we need right now; a cosmic splat of psychedelic riffage and demon-belching vocals, a Road Warrior-esque rip-ride through some violent rock'n'roll fantasy. It's like a cursed VHS tape from 1985 that depicts Armageddon thwarted by a bunch of long-haired lunatics in pope robes.

I'm not the greatest at predicting these things, but I'm pretty sure these guys are the next biggest band in the world. They're way better than U2, I'll tell you that much.

Sleazegrinder

Nothing More
Carnal BETTER NOISE

Rising radio rockers fall short of the stars.

In the decade since blowing up with their self-titled album of 2014, Nothing More have had mixed success in their quest to become rock's Next Big Thing. Grammy nominations and a US Top-20 finish for 2017's *The Stories We Tell Ourselves* gave way to "What just happened?" when 2022's *Spirits* sank without a trace. But with no major stylistic changes or dips in quality to pin the blame on, they had to take it on the chin and move on.

Carnal is a triumph, then, in the spirit of try, try again. *House On Sand*, *If It Doesn't Hurt* and *Angel Song* (featuring Disturbed's David Draiman) capture the crowd-pleasing characteristics of peak nu metal with crunching riffs and chest-beating choruses. The band don't carry that energy throughout, however; *Existential Dread* and *Stuck* are stand-outs on a B-side otherwise cluttered with throwaway interludes and generic radio mulch, dimming any potential star turn.

Rich Hobson

L.A. Edwards
Pie Town BITCHIN' MUSIC GROUP

Country boys go Hollywood via New Jersey.

Ever since 2018's *True Blue*, L.A. Edwards have been getting more polished than their Americana roots could bear. Thankfully with this latest album they find a canny buffer: post-*Born To Run* Springsteen. Granted, *Pie Town* doesn't have anthems of *that* calibre, but by embracing heartland rock they capture the earnest warmth of their earlier releases while leaning more comfortably on their 80s pop tendencies.

At its best, this results in rockers like *Don't Know Better* and *I Won't*, driving bass and stadium synths offering a sense of buoyancy. But soulful numbers like *For You* and *Angel Wait* still feel too slick, more Wet Wet Wet than any Springsteen/Petty fan will want to try. The middle ground is staid country rock, *Little Sunshine* and *El Camino* perfectly enjoyable if you don't mind a lack of emotional depth, but especially frustrating when *Waterfall* and *Can You See Me* show the waters can run deep.

Rich Hobson

The Hu
Live At Glastonbury

BBC/BETTER NOISE

Record Store Day live album from the Mongolian men, now available to all.

With its yurt-friendly hills and spiritual bent, the Glastonbury festival should be the perfect environment for Mongolian sensations The Hu, but this live album tells a different story. They're an electrifying band, but this recording feels heavy-handed. Maybe it's all that touring with labelmates Megadeth and Five Finger Death Punch, maybe it's the BBC mix, but the morin-khuur (horsehead violin) seems to have ceded ground to overdriven guitar and thudding drums, and The Hu sound less like folk-metal Shamen on the bridleway to transcendence, and more like Rammstein. A cover of Metallica's *Through The Never* keeps the thump to a maximum, and even the seal-clubbing sound can't spoil the wonderful *Yuve Yuve Yu* or *Wolf Totem*.

Fraser Lewry

ROUND-UP: BLUES

By Henry Yates

Mdou Moctar: music to stop you in your tracks.

C BRUYILDIZ/PRESS

Mdou Moctar
Funeral For Justice MATADOR

On his seventh album, Niger guitarist Moctar holds no truck with such first-world blues concerns as cheating women and fictional hellhounds. Always a political animal, his themes on *Funeral For Justice* are larger and his treatments fierier than ever; the twisty riff of the title track coruscates over lyrics about the trampling of African rights; the trash-can stomp of *Oh France* demands satisfaction from his country's former colonial overlords (the vocals are in Tamasheq, but the message gets through).

Heavy as that sounds, the guitarist – who came up playing local weddings – remembers he is an entertainer first, and these tracks pulse with a momentum that suggests dancing – try the manic *Sousoume Tamacheq*, with its Morello-worthy feedback squall, or *Imouhar*, featuring an early contender for solo of the year). Only on the closing *Modern Slaves* does he take a breath, the relatively mellow acoustic lament belying Moctar's angry doubts that Niger will ever escape its centuries-old shadows. Like the rest of *Funeral For Justice*, it's music to stop you in your tracks.

The Bad Day
The Irish Goodbye

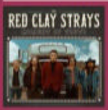
CRACKERJACK

In 2022, Londoners The Bad Day's self-titled double concept album made our year-end podium. While *The Irish Goodbye* is less expansive – 11 tracks, no messing – it's equally brilliant, with the glorious jangle of *A Long Shot* typical of these Midas-touch hook writers, and the rollicking *Welcome To The Show* a set opener that other bands would kill for.

Ledfoot
Outsiders TBC

Deep, ragged and raw, Tim Scott McConnell – aka Ledfoot – has a voice like the dirt shucked down on a coffin, and his tales of yearning and regret ring true in a world of pipsqueaks. It makes his recent single *Thunder And Rain* sound like the raging of an Old Testament god, and even renders the 12-string jangle of *Dead Is Dead* portentous.

The Red Clay Strays
Moment Of Truth THIRTY TIGERS



It's all kicked off since Alabama five-piece the Red Clay Strays self-released this debut album in the States two years back. Now it's Britain's turn to fall under the spell of a band who have everything from a mesmeric Elvis-esque frontman (Brandon Coleman) to a mezcal-steeped, desert-scorched sound (try *Stone's Throw*).

Johnny Mars & The Cold Heart Revue
The River Is Long SELF-RELEASED

Not just a lovely story – Johnny Mars and David Robinson met when the South Carolina harp legend held a workshop at the latter's Portsmouth primary school in the 90s – this second album from the transatlantic pairing is glorious, their ego-free push and pull on *I Can't Buy Harmonicas* everything that blues collaborations should be.

RAYMOND STEENWIJK/PRESS

Focus

Focus 12 SPIRIT OF UNICORN MUSIC

Old Dutch masters return.

There's a magnificent YouTube clip of Focus on BBC TV's *The Old Grey Whistle Test* from December 1972 launching into what was fast becoming their calling card: *Hocus Pocus*, a glorious piece of musical madness that jerks between frantic heavy metal riffs, a yodelling and warbling wordless falsetto voice that rises higher and higher until it turns into a scream, and a series of insane drum breaks.

You could dismiss it as a slice of novelty nonsense, except that it's obvious that behind the frippery is a complex arrangement that requires considerable skill to perform live. To cap it all, singer and keyboard player Thijs van Leer suddenly departs from his wordless script to wish us all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, en route to another high-pitched scream.

Focus were already on their third album by then, and now, 52 years and a whole soap opera later, comes *Focus 12*. Van Leer is still leading the group, and he is joined by drummer Pierre van der Linden who was present in 1972 and is in fine fettle aged 78. The notable absentee is guitarist Jan Akkerman (Brian May's main inspiration), who hasn't been around for at least 30 years, although his on/off relationship with van Leer is probably worth a Netflix series. Menno Gooties, who has been Focus's guitarist since 2010, is a more than adequate replacement who now has four Focus albums under his belt, and 'new boy' bassist Udo Pannekeet is no slouch either. The fact that it's difficult to tell which one of the tracks on this album was improvised spontaneously during the sessions proves what a tight unit they are.

The prevailing format for the 10 instrumental tracks is to set up a melodic theme that is repeated two or three times before being expanded, either with a jazzier but carefully arranged section or by letting the band off the leash for a while. The melodies vary from grandiose to sombre – there's even a classical-sounding fugue at one point – and are introduced by either van Leer's piano or Hammond, or by the whole band.

The gentle piano-led introduction to *Bela* (a homage to van Leer's favourite 20th-century composer) leads to some fine guitar themes over an increasingly resonant backing, while the more discordant piano introduction on *Positano* gives way to some electronically treated flute before taking jazzy flight. There are no vocals – wordless or otherwise – although you can occasionally discern some background muttering.

Hugh Fielder

Cage The Elephant

Neon Pill RCA

Colourful, ambitious sixth from Kentucky's garage-pop Flaming Lips.

The neon pill of the title track refers to the medication that left Elephant singer Matt Schultz suffering psychotic delusions for three years, leading to his 2023 arrest on gun-license charges, and months in hospital.

That this sixth album, arriving five years after the Grammy winning *Social Cues*, subtly explores this period while sounding so bright and kaleidoscopic is a miracle on par with his swift recovery. *Rainbow* is pure Technicolor lounge funk, the title track paints grandiose Gallic pop in luminescent tones, and *Float Into The Sky*, concerning psychotic isolation, is a gorgeous dream-pop drifter that sounds like an aurora borealis afterglow. There's a minor Beck rap dip on *Ball And Chain* and *Good Time*, but the psych-Strokes momentum of *Metaverse* and *Silent Picture* keeps matters nimble, and here be some of the year's most uplifting choruses.

Brilliantly bright-side.

Mark Beaumont

Kittie

Fire SUMERIAN

Claws out for a long-wait comeback.

The summer of post-hiatus comebacks continues with the return of Canadian metallers Kittie, 13 years after the release of their previous album *I've Failed You*. They're unrecognisable from the nu-metal upstarts who first appeared in 1999, having morphed over the years into a more straight-ahead metal band, and today good and evil rage in vocalist/guitarist Morgan Lander and her sister, drummer/vocalist Mercedes, with clean vocals bringing the light in contrast to the dark of the rasping, pained growl unleashed over a never-ending barrage of steely riffs.

With that growl-and-riff combo, Kittie have very much nailed their colours to the mast; *Fire* is strictly for the metal crowd, for festivals, for conjuring hair-flinging energy for like-minded people, rather than appeasing an imaginary wider audience. The lyrics are violent and doomy, the music aggressive and relentless, but there's a defiant joy at play, a pure love for the genre rediscovered after all this time.

Emma Johnston

Nathanial Rateliff & The Night Sweats

South Of Here STAX

Old forms given new life for the modern age.

The fine line between contemplation and navel gazing has always been a difficult balancing act to achieve, but here Nathanial Rateliff, ably backed by the soulful Night Sweats on their fourth studio album, does so without the use of a safety net. And that this collective of musicians does so by breathing new life into established formats is to be applauded.

With a lineage that stretches back to the cosmic Celtic soul of Van Morrison, Rateliff's storytelling confronts his own doubts and perceived shortcomings. The rollicking *David And Goliath* grows in stature with the band pumping up as Rateliffe sings '*The sun can't shine for me every day*' with the realisation that good times come with the bad. The barroom waltz of the title track looks to a brighter future, while the yearning *Remember I Was A Dancer* is a reconciliation with the past that results in blue-eyed soul for grown ups.

Julian Marszalek

The Decemberists

As It Ever Was, So It Will Be Again YABB/THIRTY TIGERS

Uneven yet sometimes brilliant opus from the cerebral Portland folk-rockers.

You can't fault the restless ambition of Decemberists ringmaster and arch conceptualist Colin Meloy. The band's sixth studio album climaxes with a haunting, ominous, 20-minute prog epic complete with a musique concrète middle section. It's by far the most powerful piece of music they've ever made. The rest of the album is a mixed bag stuffed with a few too many generic mid-paced plodders based on borrowed folk/country melodies, but it's the scattered highlights you'll remember and

return to. Meloy is a talented commercial songwriter at heart; check out the *Sloop John B*-indebted ear worm *Burial Ground*, the sweetly sincere *All I Want Is You*, the neo-psychedelic *Born To The Morning*, and, best of all, *America Made Me*, an ironic, eccentric, anguished folk-pop bop in the classic Decemberists mould.

Paul Whitelaw

Crystal Viper

The Silver Key LISTENABLE

Katowice's finest hit new heights of metal authenticity.

Led by the hugely charismatic Marta Gabriel, Crystal Viper have been one of Poland's most significant metal bands over the past 20 years. Proudly old-school and helplessly/sensibly in thrall to Iron Maiden, they continue to defend the metal faith on *The Silver Key*, their ninth full-length album.

With Gabriel's voice as their not-so-secret weapon, they have long been able to make their most traditional elements zing with freshness, and here songs like *Fever Of The Gods* and *Old House In The Mist* breathlessly fulfil their old-school brief of souped-up speed metal delivered with ferocity, while also boasting huge chorus hooks that are as punchy and memorable as any in the contemporary power-metal scene. The riveting, pomp-sodden ear worm of the title track and the Warlock-like *Cosmic Forces Overtake* are the obvious standouts, as Crystal Viper continue their slow but steady journey towards heavy metal glory, sounding very much like the real, denim-clad thing.

Dom Lawson

Mammal

The Penny Drop INDEPENDENT

Groove and social justice from the Aussie crew.

Funk-rock is not the most obvious conduit for political discourse, which is presumably one of the many reasons Red Hot Chili Peppers are such crashing lyrical bores. And yet Aussie band Mammal have combined a surf-bum look, a beer-chugging groove and a party atmosphere with calls for freedom of speech, social justice and fighting the forces of fascism. The musically darker *Doubt* – a sweeping, despairing stadium rocker – stands in sharp contrast to a daft song titled *Keanu Reeves*

Quite the mixed bag, then, but the energy and enthusiasm never flags for a second, with scatter-gun riffs exploding over fuzzed up rock'n'roll to keep the adrenalin pumping.

The Penny Drop presents rebellion as the most fun you can have while making a difference in society, making Mammal a Rage Against The Machine you'd actually want to go to the pub with.

Emma Johnston

Pond

Stung! SPINNING TOP

Perth rockers chalk up their most enjoyable album to date.

You've gotta hand it to Pond, they never make half-arsed albums. Right from 2013's refreshing breakthrough *Hobo Rocket* to 2021's wildly experimental *9*, the Aussie psych-rockers' output over the years has been consistently smart and expansive. And tenth studio album *Stung!* is no exception.

In fact it's easily their most sprawling and interesting record to date. Bulging with psych firecrackers like the Led Zep-riffing *Neon River* and the swirling *Black Lung*, Tame Impala's sister band also pack in punching pop numbers like the cosmic anthem *(I'm) Stung* and the Prince-strutting *So Lo*. At the centre of this near-double LP is the meandering eight-minute wig-out *Edge Of The World Pt.3*, which opens with swinging church bells and sweet flute sounds before giving way to skittering synth stabs and a monster guitar solo.

Pond continue to make high-quality records on their own terms, and *Stung!* is undoubtedly one of their most enjoyable. Turn it up!

Damian Jones

Status Quo

Official Archive Series Vol 3 Live At Westonbirt Arboretum EARMUSIC

A decent rock'n'roll live album, but...

Recorded outdoors in June 2008, this two-CD/triple vinyl collection contains more than two dozen songs, more than half dating from the nine years (1971-79) that old Quo fans, this reviewer included, insist were the band's heyday.

When the 'Frantic Four' line-up from that period re-formed in 2013, road warriors Francis Rossi and Rick Parfitt presented a very different show to this one. Comparing this and the live albums from five years later, it's clear why Rossi had so little positive to say about them. As this shows, *this* Quo had – above all – come to rely on the keyboards of Andy Bown. But *Caroline* was a hard-rock tour-de-force that never needed boogie-woogie piano. And no 11-and-a-half minute medley ending in *Big Fat Mama* should be followed by *Living On An Island* featuring Parfitt's noticeably shakey vocal.

Are Quo any good here? Technically, yes. More fun? No.

Neil Jeffries

Axel Rudi Pell

Risen Symbol SPV

Shredding continues to be the law.

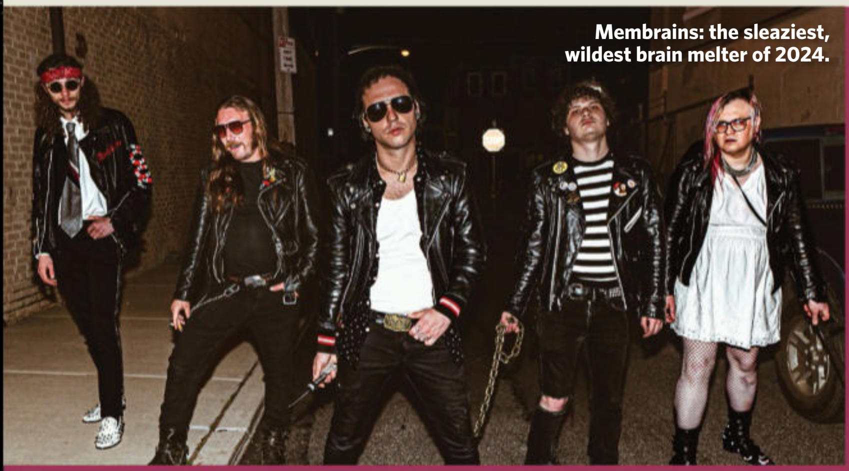
Deep in the ancient scrolls of heavy metal lore, you will find the *Tale Of Two Steelers*. One settled in LA and introduced the world to egomaniacal uber-shredder Yngwie Malmsteen, the other Steeler was German and had the less temperamental but equally fleet-fingered guitarist Axel Rudi Pell. Pell is the one who didn't freak out in a drunken rage on an aeroplane in 1988.

Risen Symbol is his twenty-second solo album, and it's a ripper. Fortified by the Dio-esque vocals of Johnny Gioeli, Pell's bombastic odes to ancient warriors meld melodic hard rock and crunching, epic metal with such precision that your jaw will surely hit the floor. Personally I could've done without the noodly Zep cover (*Immigrant Song*) and momentum-killing ballad *Crying In Pain*, but otherwise this is a fearsome and highly satisfying display of unlimited firepower from one of the best axe slingers in the biz.

Sleazegrinder

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder



Membrains: the sleaziest, wildest brain melter of 2024.

Membrains

Membrains SELF-RELEASED

Spoiler alert: this is the best album of the year. I've probably said that about something else in the past six or so months, but I was lying. This is it, the sleaziest, wildest, head-boppingest brain melter of 2024. Membrains sound like literal lizards, encased in black leather skin, belting out party anthems for people who've ruined every party they've ever been to. Despite their name, there's not a lot of brain work here; this is all groin thunder. And of course the best thing about it is that the Membrains could not care less what I think.

Antisocial and gleefully confrontational, *Membrains* hits the ground running with chugging opener *Genie In A Bottle* and doesn't let go of your throat until slithery closer *The Hunt*. Along the way we're battered and bruised with the kind of maximum rock'n'roll that bands like the Black Halos and Die Cheerleader delivered when we were all young and good looking. Sorta doesn't matter if you're the burly beer drinker or the skinny glam-slammer, this is gonna work for everybody who reads this column. I bet these guys smoke cigarettes. I'm in love, quite frankly.

The Loyal Cheaters

And All Hell Broke Loose GO DOWN

Singer/guitarist Lena McFrison is a true belter who sounds sorta like Suzi Quatro/Doro fronting the Backyard Babies. The Cheaters' first album was a monster of glam-punk stompers, and they've avoided the second-album slump, with McFrison roaring and shredding through high-energy rockers that crackle with Saturday-night energy.

R'N'Cs

Flytrap In The Murderhouse SELF-RELEASED

This French garage-punk trio write songs about important issues like shitting blood (*Shit Or Blood*), hating cops (*ACAB*) and rockin' (*Rock City Blood, Folsom Prison Rock*), all recorded with the kinda ragged urgency of dudes who are gonna get arrested tomorrow. Action-packed rock'n'roll straight from the gutter.

The Erotics

Destined To Damnation SELF-RELEASED

The Erotics are one of the most consistent sleaze-metal bands of the past two decades, delivering one heater after another in their patented Alice Cooper-meets-a-buzz-saw style. But this one might tickle a different fancy in you: this album has mandolins on it! And pedal steel! And a (toy) piano! Is it the end times? Maybe. Still a killer, though.

The Battlebeats

Meet Your Maker SELF-RELEASED

As you might guess from their monicker, these Nashville gunks are all about wrecking the party. Minute-long rippers like *No Self Control, You Ain't Better Than Me* and *Born To Lose* are angry, snotty and incendiary, and since the whole thing is over in 15 minutes it's also highly repeatable. If you hate everybody, you'll love this.

The Hard Stuff
ALBUMS

Tyler Bryant & The Shakedown

Electrified RATTLE SHAKE RECORDS

Eleven great songs on album number six. Will the numbers add up for them this time?

A superb sixth studio album from Tyler Bryant & The Shakedown as the band reach a stage in their career where some of their heroes had already peaked and collapsed into a mess of their own creation. With Aerosmith it was drug-fuelled, with The Black Crowes sibling rivalry was chiefly to blame. On the upside, Blackberry Smoke's sixth album *Find A Light* reached No.1 in the UK rock chart (and 31 on the *Billboard* list), while Led Zep's sixth was called *Physical Graffiti*.

But as good as *Electrified* is, will it catapult Tyler Bryant & The Shakedown into the arena-packing bracket? Probably not, even though less talented bands have enjoyed far greater success. But them's the breaks.

Back in the day, any other act that sounded like the four legends mentioned above would surely be living the high life by now. Yet even laced with the more contemporary stylings of The Black Keys/Cadillac Three/White Stripes, this young band – Bryant on vocals, guitar and (in the studio, at least) bass, fellow guitarist Graham Whitford and drummer Caleb Crosby – are far from household names.

Which is a shame, because this album crackles with energy from start to finish even though it was recorded in a home-basement studio. Its 11 songs are all short and sweet, never outstaying their welcome in a 36-minute running time that proves that less is more.

From the nice'n'ratty Aerosmith-style opener *Between The Lines* to album closer *Carefree Easy Rollin'* (its title the band in a nutshell), *Electrified* is a very easy listen. By turns, the Shakedown shift between funky rocking, heavy riffing and bluesy slide, sounding great whichever gear they're in.

The single *Snake Oil* was conceived as a homage to the Crowes and Blackberry Smoke and is bang on target. They can do fast, as in mission statement *Shake You Down*, or rock hard as in the big-riffed *Dead To Rights* and *Mona* (the latter sounding a bit like Page and co. rewriting The Beatles' *Come Together*). They're equally adept employing slower tempos, as in the swampy *Crossfire* or the country-fied *One And Lonely* on which Bryant's wife Rebecca and her sister Megan Lovell of Larkin Poe also sing. *Happy Gets Made* features vocals by celebrated Texan blues/gospel singer Ruthie Foster (who has also sung with the Allman Brothers Band, among countless others), and if you fancy some Skynyrd-style down-south jukin' there's *Movin'* and *Trick Up My Sleeve*.

This band really do sound electrified, playing high-voltage rock'n'roll.

Neil Jeffries

High Desert Queen

Palm Reader MAGNETIC EYE

Texan desert sandstorm.

After gestating as a stoner-rock offshoot around California's Palm Desert at the cusp of the 90s, desert-rock has gained spangled new emissaries through the uproarious incantatory jams of Austin-based High Desert Queen. Following their 2021 debut *Secrets Of The Black Moon*, guitarist Rusty Miller's enormous crowbar riffs thunder, and Ryan Garney's Ozzy-hued vocals vent as launch pads for tree-trunk bassist Morgan Miller and earthquake drummer Phil Hook to hit the 'voodoo jam' button and strike into the unknown, sometimes joined by spoken incantations.

Apart from obligatory early Sabbath, High Desert Queen can evoke anyone from Blue Cheer and Black Widow to the Stooges' *Dirt* on *Tuesday Night Blues*. Miller's monster riffs on *Head Honcho* and *Ancient Aliens* recall a slowed-down Fast Eddie Clarke, including the late Motörhead guitarist's technique in syphoning Hendrix-style wah-wah into heavyweight doom-rock on *Time Waster* and the epic title track.

Kris Needs

Anvil

One And Only AFM RECORDS

Veteran metal maniacs don't switch things up on album 20.

The real story here is that Steve Kudlow and Robb Reiner are celebrating the big 2-0 with Anvil's twentieth album. Everything they've done since 2008 has been entwined with the must-watch *The Story Of Anvil* rockumentary, in which the band's real-life Spinal Tap credentials are laid bare, and if you've seen it you'll know that it's something of a miracle that the Canadian metallers are still plugging away in 2024.

And there's plenty of gusto on *One And Only*, but why *Fight For Your Rights* doesn't open the record is a mystery. Its machine-gun drums and ripping lead breaks are poles apart from the lumpen title track. Lead single *Feed Your Fantasy* rumbles along with riff-happy zeal. *Run Away* is catchy as hell, and Kudlow's clunky, comic-book vocals are part of his charm.

Five decades in, the metal going is still good for Anvil.

Chris Lord

Soft Machine

Hovikodden 1971 CUNEIFORM

Free-jazz oddness released from the archives.

"If you don't make mistakes," said the jazz saxophonist Coleman Hawkins, "you aren't really trying."

Soft Machine were certainly trying when they played an Oslo arts centre over two nights in late February 1971, accompanying films by Mark Boyle. This marathon live recording – around half of which has never been released before – captures Robert Wyatt (who left that year), Hugh Hopper, Mike Ratledge and Elton Dean wailing loud and free with scant regard for rhythm, melody or anything resembling accessibility. It spins mostly off material from the albums *Third* and *Fourth*, but whether by accident or design it spends more time spinning out. It's likely that diehard fans with a taste for the extremely esoteric will find oceans of cosmic meaning within its jarring shrieks and clangs, while neutrals may wonder how on earth the quartet maintained straight faces while presenting such haywire chaos to an audience.

One for the initiated.

Chris Roberts

Royal Republic

LoveCop HARMAGEDDON/OMN

Rock'n'roll boogie wonderland.

Swapping the gold lamé lounge jackets of 2019's magnificent *Club Majesty* for full Priest biker leathers this time round, these exuberant Swedes have now fully assimilated the power of disco and aren't afraid to use it.

As the throbbing *My House* shimmers into life with slick 80s production flourishes, you know there's no denying this party invitation. The title track boasts an irresistible thumping bass line, *Wow! Wow! Wow!* features a rumbling, Eddie Gunn-style riff, *Freakshow* brings the funk, Adam Grahn's vocal channelling David Lee Roth, F-bombs going off left, right and centre, and sitting in prime position is the astonishing, crystalline mirror-ball ballad *Lazerlove*. *Boots, Love Somebody* and *Ain't Got Time*

are fast, riffy and eminently danceable, while full-throttle love song *Electra* sets up closer *Sha-La-La-Lady*, which finds the band going almost fully Kool & The Gang.

Lovecop is a disco inferno Royal Republic style.

Essi Berelian

Vain

Disintegrate Together

JACKIE RAINBOW

A remarkable rebirth from the Bay Area sleaze mavericks.

Back in 1989, Vain appeared to hold the world in their palm. Gushing reviews greeted their wonderful debut album *No Respect*, and the San Franciscans were 'special guests' on the fateful night that Lemmy and Steve Harris jammed *Train Kept A-Rollin'* with headliners Skid Row at London's Hammersmith Odeon. Alas the sale of Vain's label, Island Records, led to the follow-up being shelved, and Road Crew, singer Davy Vain's venture with ex-GN'R drummer Steven Adler, would prove equally doomed. Subsequent Vain albums were credible enough, but saw band leader Davy depart – just a little – from the icy, dark, salacious sleaze-rock that had threatened to bring superstardom.

Like its now six-year-old predecessor *Rolling With The Punches*, *Disintegrate Together* is an aural time machine that transports us directly back three and a half decades. Vain's voice still sounds astonishing on edgy opener *Cold Like Snow*, his current line-up replicate the unique, off-kilter style of the original group, and it's easy to imagine any of the following nine songs having graced *No Respect*.

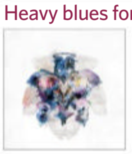
Disintegrate Together is the real deal. Don't miss it.

Dave Ling

Mooch

Visions BLACK THRONE PRODUCTIONS

Heavy blues for the red sun.



This third album from Mooch – a band from Montreal but still sounding way more like they were birthed in the Palm Desert scene – takes their already established synthesis of stoner rock and Doorsy vibes and pushes the envelope even further. Heavy, fuzzed out grooves, plenty of light and shade, plus guitarist/vocalist Ben Cornel's uncanny Morrison-esque phrasing and tone make tracks like *Morning Prayer, Together, Vision* and *New Door* (natch) a beguiling listen. The level of songwriting invention, from the full-on bluesy riffage of opener *Hangtime* to psychedelic acoustic hymn *Intention*, is epically broad throughout. *Intention* in particular demonstrates an impressive flair for melodic complexity.

Mooch have set themselves a challenging benchmark for the future.

Essi Berelian

The Flowers Of Indulgence

Dylan's Lost Songs Vol. 1 TBS

Scouring the basement.

Not lost exactly but certainly well buried, and even now obscured by the weight of other songs above them, these 12 songs are taken from *The Complete Basement Tapes* released in 2014 – 138 songs on six CDs, recorded by Dylan with The Band in 1967 while he fished around for what to do next.

There's none of the legendary stuff (*This Wheel's On Fire, Quinn The Eskimo*) or even the intriguing also-rans (*Please Mrs Henry, Lo And Behold*). No, these songs are from CDs 5 and 6, by which time some songs and lyrics are little more than fragments. But this bunch of anonymous Scottish musicians have found enough to spruce up and record in a style that Dylan might have done around his *Planet Waves* period. They've certainly brought a vitality to songs such as *One Man's Loss, She's On My Mind Again, Can't Make It Alone* and the archetypal Dylan story song, *Wild Wolf*.

Hugh Fielder

Soundwalk Collective With Patti Smith

Correspondences Vol 1

BELLA UNION

Her poetic quest continues.

At 77 years old, and half a century since *Horses* announced her as NY punk's new figurehead, Patti Smith is still striving to place her intimately cathartic poetry against musical settings her similarly inclined hero Jim Morrison could only dream of.

The ever-questing Smith has been collaborating with experimental global field foragers Soundwalk Collective for more than 10 years (sometimes with Charlotte Gainsbourg and Philip Glass), producing tribute albums to inspirations including Antonin Artaud, Arthur Rimbaud and Rene Damal.

Consisting of two epic tone poems, this latest unfurls Smith's evocatively up-front words against vivid tapestries of drones and field recordings. Halfway in, *Pasolini* quite naturally introduces a heartbeat-driven motorik dance groove; *Medea* recalls David Lynch dreamscapes before medieval-like chorale takes over.

Still spellbinding, Smith has found a boundary-free outpost under the mainstream radar for her irrepressible beat-punk lyricism, even occasionally sounding like Morrison's *American Prayer* replanted in the African bush.

Kris Needs

Johnny Cash

Songwriter

MERCURY NASHVILLE/UME

The Man In Black's buried treasures.

Prior to Johnny Cash's renaissance with the *American* series, he'd been all but discarded by the music industry in the early 90s. Without a record label, in 1993 Cash tenaciously reverted to what he did best, entering Nashville's LSI studios to demo a collection of his own compositions.

After the recordings were rediscovered three decades later by son John Carter Cash (who also co-produced), Cash's voice and acoustic guitar have been fleshed out with accompaniment from former bandmates Marty Stuart (guitar) and Dave Roe (bass), setting Cash's Mount Rushmore-sized vocal presence in roots-oriented arrangements. By placing the emphasis on Cash's then-overlooked songwriting flair, the album plays like a cohesive lost gem. *Hello Out There*'s blend of sharp wit and spirituality, the addiction-themed *Like A Soldier*'s upbeat nod to his Sun Records-era sound, and schmaltz-free ballad *I Love You Tonight* reaffirm Cash's unique musical personality and gift for plain-spoken eloquence.

Rich Davenport

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Moon Shot

The Power REAPER

Comprising four Finnish Children Of Bodom, Disco Ensemble and Lapko alumni, mainland Europe-conquering power-pop-rockers Moon Shot have produced a second set that's rich in slickly searing hooks, asset-stripping ballads and the yawn-inducingly obvious. **5/10**

Various

Kimono My House: 50 Years Later PALE WIZARD

From Phoxjaw's pounding, maximalist *This Town Ain't Big Enough For Both Of Us* to Besvärjelsen's woozy, goth-gazing *Equator*, none of the dozen punters gracing this golden tribute to Sparks' breakthrough third boast an alien charm akin to that of the sainted Maels. **6/10**

Knives

What We See In Their Eyes EP HOUND DAWG!

Coming across like Huggy Bear's *Herjazz* on steroids, unfiltered fury and righteous rage, cutting-edge Bristol post-punk collective Knives blurt out five in-your-face ejaculations that beautifully smush together PE, Bob Vylan, RATM and care in the community gone mad. **8/10**

Sooma

Drü GLUTTONY

French-Helvetian assault force Sooma are multi-lingual, not big on tunes, but absolutely huge on astringent atonal riffs and relentlessly insistent pop-averse shouting. 'Drü' means 'three' in Swiss-German, BTW. Should you ever be ordering Shredded Wheats in Zurich. **7/10**

The Howlers

What Have You Got To Lose To Win It All BANDCAMP

This sounds like the kind of record of which much is hoped. A few quid's been spent on its production; there's clear ambition in the young, thrusting East London trio's heroic hooks. It's all good, until you take an instant irrational dislike to the lead vocal. Maybe it's just me. **6/10**

Jeff Slate

The Last Day Of Summer SCHNITZEL

Turns out Jeff's a bit of a long-standing ledge on the NYC rock scene. And here he is with his old pals Earl Slick, Dave Stewart, Duff McKagan and members of Paul Weller and Noel Gallagher's backing bands. Inoffensive organ-driven Tom Petty-lite adequacy, but no cigar. **7/10**

The Exact Opposite

Skill Issue DENTAL

Refreshingly direct, packed with good ideas, baited with infectious rock attitude, barbed hooks, tangible verve – the right stuff of timeless pop. Nigel Powell (Unbelievable Truth) and Jamie Stuart (Dustball) clearly offer the ideal yin to each other's melodic yang. **7/10**

Man Man

Carrot On Strings SUB POP

You know when an album's baffling digressions call to mind both XTC and Holger Czukay? No? Me neither. Normally, but MM aren't ordinary men. Instrumentation, rhythm, vibes all surprise, pleasantly. Like Andy Partridge… but not. Classic Sub Pop. **8/10**

Love Fiend

Hard Feelings IN THE RED

LA's Love Fiend are clearly enamoured of new-wave pop tropes, and *Hard Feelings* comes across as a wilfully commercial smoothie of post-Bowie vocal affectation, sax parps, D.A.F. kebab dreams, vintage synths and ghastly tailoring. Eighties revival, you say. Can we not? **6/10**

Lumberob

Hunter Gather SHIMMY DISC

Loop jockey, sound collagist and all-round Manhattan innovator Rob 'Not Roky' Erickson (aka Lumberob) has been working with renowned audio architect Kramer for over 25 years, and *Hunter Gather* might well be their undefinable, irresistible masterpiece. **8/10**

Shotgun Mistress

Kings Of The Revolution INDEPENDENT

This second from Australian hard rockers Shotgun Mistress delivers on their earlier promise. Like an unlikely if undeniable combination of Pantera's *Cowboys From Hell* and Terrorvision's radio-friendly catnip Britrock, *Kings Of The Revolution* ticks every box. **8/10**

BEST OF THE REST REVIEWS BY IAN FORTNAM

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THE HARD STUFF REISSUES

1972 © THE DAVID BOWIE ARCHIVE. PHOTO BY BRIAN WARD

David Bowie

David Bowie: Rock 'N' Roll Star! PARLOPHONE

Mothership of Bowie boxes covers *Ziggy Stardust*'s conception, birth and lift-off.

For punk-presaging impact and shapeshifting socio-cultural resonance, *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars* felt like the first truly significant rock album of the seismic 70s, precipitating David Bowie manifesting as the first modern superstar.

It's taken 52 years for the album to get its box set, and the glittering gold mine of previously unheard song doodles, demos and out-takes doesn't disappoint. From February 1971's hotel-room sketch *So Long 60s* prototyping *Moonage Daydream*, to *Starman*'s landmark *Top Of The Pops* performance 18 months later, this five-CD and Blu-ray disc set feels more like a heavyweight set of bonus tracks (29 previously unreleased) than the standard reissue plus out-takes. The album itself is only on Blu-ray, removing its climax for erm, older fans not familiar with that format. That triumph goes to *Starman*, complete with *TOTP* backing track.

The set's fairly haphazard programming illustrates how *Ziggy*'s lift-off was not a clean trajectory, December 1971's *Hunky Dory* almost getting in the way of the new monster unleashed live the following month, not selling immediately. Sleeve-notes confirm the uproarious crowd reaction to Bowie's debut at this writer's local Friars Aylesbury club in September 1971, providing the confidence-boosting impetus to reinvent himself (as he told this writer after raising the club's roof with Velvet Underground and Chuck Berry covers). Watching Bowie visibly transform from shy folkie into preening rock star suggests this landmark gig (a YouTube fave) would be more pertinent than CD4's non-*Ziggy* tracks from October 1972's Boston show. Four months later he unveiled *Ziggy Stardust* at the same venue.

Bowie's subsequent dilemma of riding two very different records is illustrated by radio broadcasts from the limbo months between revealing *Ziggy* and that album's June '72 release, all new material apart from *Hunky Dory*'s *Queen Bitch*.

As shown here, *Ziggy Stardust*'s final track-listing constantly evolved until replacing *Around And Around* with *Starman* added the vital hit single. Earlier inclusions pruned for falling outside the emerging concept include *Velvet Goldmine*, *Sweet Head* and haunting *Shadow Man*. Alternative versions include a deeper-voiced *Lady Stardust* (itself a *Hunky Dory* out-take).

Ultimately still mesmerising, enhanced by photos and memorabilia-stacked book plus 36-page reproduction of Bowie's notebooks, the box set provides a suitably chaotic time capsule of a magical period now bathed in extraordinary poignancy.

Kris Needs

Frank Zappa & The Mothers Of Invention

Live At The Whisky A Go Go 1968 ZAPPA/UME

Five-LP, 32-track reissue of halcyon live set, with added bonus material.

On a sultry evening in July 1968, Frank Zappa and his merry band of Mothers set up at the Whisky A Go Go club in Hollywood, and played for five hours with the intention of recording an album. The evening could not have gone better. The Mothers were at their peak, lampooning the dead-pop past, anticipating possible futures, embracing the present moment in high spirits.

In an evening that also included a show by a young Alice Cooper, Zappa and his band pulled out the stops. There was the satire of *God Bless America*, the national anthem as if re-imagined by the composer Edgard Varèse, the pastiche of pop musics from a more innocent era on the faux-preppy *Status Back Baby*, and *Oh, In The Sky* featuring a ludicrously contorted falsetto vocal.

The more advanced musics presented here were meant to imply that Zappa represented a giant evolutionary stride for rock and pop. That didn't quite pan out, but the likes of *King Kong*, a free, electric jazz workout featuring Don Preston, Ian Underwood, Bunk Gardner and others does in some ways anticipate what Miles Davis was about to do. The language of 'wildness', freakiness surrounding this event are deceptive. As *The Duke* shows (both takes of which are available here for the first time), the Mothers produced some of the most tightly, soberly scripted rock music ever made.

David Stubbs

Wild Billy Childish

From Fossilised Cretaceous Seams. Wild Billy Childish: A Short History of His Song And Dance Groups DAMAGED GOODS

Unnecessarily long title for all-too-brief career retrospective of garage punk OG.

Poetically Stuckist in both art and nature, from the 70s punk era of the Pop Rivets' budget thrash to the avant-Billy of The Musicians Of The British Empire, Billy Childish has formed and split myriad bands in the past 40-plus years. Raw, primitive and reassuringly uncompromising in both garage punk and economic terms, he has an obstreperous approach to the concept of supply and demand, with a tendency to either go on art strike, or flood his label by releasing records in the region of approximately 342 albums per year.

The perfect entry point for the uninitiated, this ambitious compilation covers much cobbled ground (although conspicuous by its absence is the single greatest song ever recorded in the history of skin-peeling rock'n'roll: Thee Mighty Caesars' *Wiley Coyote*. Not to mention his collabs; Armitage Shanks's reassuringly violent Medway aggro of *Shirts Off*). Nonetheless, it's a bruising journey through the vintage Childish rudimentary rock squawk – a standard to which any rock pretenders should aspire to emulate. Indeed, while all those bands deep in hock to Billy (White Stripes, Quadrajets, Teengenerate, Soledad Brothers, Mummies, etc etc) of the 90s garage revival burned bright but fleetingly, Childish will never change or go away. And thank Christ for that.

Prime rock'n'roll in its glorious purest form.

Alex Burrows

Rival Sons

Head Down SACRED TONGUE

Exalted rockers' breakout album is even finer with hindsight (and a remaster).

In the past 15 years, what has set Rival Sons apart from their peers is that they're an odyssey and a rock band in equal parts. They've been able to finesse their sound on each album – all eight capture a distinct vibe, while many acts struggle to evolve within the classic/retro-rock spectrum. Frontman Jay Buchanan has commented on this reissue, talking up *Head Down*'s cinematic qualities and acknowledging it as an origin story for what followed. None more so than the sprawling *Manifest Destiny* duology. The band have always been well mixed, but this remaster yields even more electricity. *Jordan* is a dreamy, mid-album mirage,

All The Way the sassiest song in their history, and *Three Fingers* is somehow wild and chic at the same time, thanks mainly to Michael Miley's feral drumming. Buchanan has the rock'n'roll shaman thing cracked these days, but *Keep On Swinging* still feels like his true introduction as a world-class voice, while Scott Holiday's guitar licks dance around with bluesy defiance.

Head Down was ground zero for the huge hype chucked towards Rival Sons, and at every turn they've risen to the occasion and crafted arguably the most compelling catalogue in rock this millennium.

Chris Lord

AC/DC

Reissues

Yet more bad-boy boogie at 50.

Any more for any more? That would be a resounding "Yes". So here we have the second wave of AC/DC-at-50 reissues, plugging some of the gaps in the first wave – and leaving a few for a third.

Here are six slabs of limited-edition gold vinyl with exclusive art inserts, sleeve-notes and custom labels, led very much from the front by a couple of stone-cold classics in the shape of *Let There Be Rock* (**10/10**) and buzzing live album *If You Want Blood, You've Got It* (**9/10**). Nasty, heavy and wantonly raw, Bon Scott delivering some of his very best street-smart smut, *Let There Be Rock* is simply electrifying, featuring songs that very much still define the band: the criminally overlooked *Overdose*, the awesome title track, *Bad Boy Boogie*, *Hell Ain't A Bad Place To Be* and of course *Whole Lotta Rosie*. Drop the stylus anywhere on *If You Want Blood* and you'll hit a classic riff or 10: *Riff Raff*, *Problem Child*, *Rock 'N' Roll Damnation* and of course *Whole Lotta Rosie* again.

Jailbreak (1974, **7/10**) gathers up five tracks from the early Aussie-only albums, with the title track and *Soul Stripper* the obvious highlights. And then, once again jumping around the Brian Johnson era, we have *Ballbreaker* (**7/10**), *Stiff Upper Lip* (**7/10**) and *Rock Or Bust* (**7/10**). All are solid enough, and 2014's *Rock Or Bust*, the first with Stevie Young on rhythm guitar, in particular demonstrates that latter-day AC/DC definitely still have their fingers jammed in that high-voltage fuse box.

Essi Berelian

Nick Mason

Reissues RHINO

Opening a packet of three.

Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason's three solo albums – reissued a few years ago as a set – are now available separately. And none of them are anything like his day job.

The first, *Fictitious Sports* (**6/10**), released in 1981 and recorded during the misery of making Floyd's *The Wall*, is a deliberate antidote. Mason teamed up with avant-garde jazz artist Carla Bley, who had written a bunch of demos that were out of character, but together with Robert Wyatt they concocted an album of lively fanfares that tests Wyatt's lugubrious vocal tones to the hilt and is infused with plenty of mordant wit. Mason, meanwhile, is virtually a guest on his own album.

Profiles (1985, **4/10**) teamed Mason with guitarist Rick Fenn (10cc, Mike Oldfield and more) for an album of pop-rock that is less fun despite a vocal appearance by David Gilmour. It's also a victim of its very 80s production, although the instrumental title track rises above the mediocrity.

A couple of years later Mason and Fenn recorded the soundtrack for Donald Cammell's horror film *White Of The Eye* (**5/10**), which helped to establish a sense of malaise that suddenly tips into a gruesome slow-motion murder. Clearly they worked together when given a specific brief.

Hugh Fielder

Various

Psych! British Prog, Rock, Folk & Blues 1966-1973

DERAM/DECCA

Groovy gravy train.

Using a broader definition of psych than most, this 64-track, three-CD collection attempts to trace the sound of change as the 60s turned into the 70s. There are many gems here, from Tintern Abbey's *Vacuum Cleaner* to Jan Dukes De Grey's *Texas*, and the fact that Decca launched offshoot label Deram (with the Moody Blues' *Days Of Future Past*) to handle the overflow suggests they knew something was happening – but the sheer amount of stuff they hurled against the wall to see what stuck suggests they didn't know what it was.

This meant that plenty of stuff got through virtually unobserved, such as folk legend Davy Graham's radical reworking of Joni Mitchell's *Both Sides Now* that is still spoken about in hushed tones. But the frequent choosing of B-sides over superior A-sides suggests something else is in play – for example Ten Years After's psychedelic blues *Portable People* is far better than *The Sounds*, and while Felius Andromeda's *Cheadle Heath's Delusions* probably qualifies on its title alone, *Meditations* was deservedly the A-side.

Despite the fact that the compilers could issue a 64-track second volume without scraping the barrel, there are also label restrictions. What's needed is for someone to compile a *Nuggets*-style compilation from across the board and then license the tracks.

Hugh Fielder

John Lennon

Mind Games UMR

"I know you've heard it before." Too right.

YOKO ONO LENNON/PRESS

There's a tradition in rock of artists releasing brilliant albums and then, having to come up with a follow-up, making a kind of weak twin of the previous one (the most famous examples include Queen's *A Day At The Races* after *A Night At The Opera*).

And so it was with John Lennon's *Mind Games*. Intended to right the harm done to commercial status and reputation by his radically inclined *Some Time In New York City* album, *Mind Games* is in many ways an echo of the great *Imagine* album, its title track a vague collection of idealistic statements, its sound melodic and oddly relaxing. Unfortunately it's not so much a pale shadow of its predecessor as a pale shadow of the ghost of its predecessor's reflection seen in a rapidly evaporating puddle.

Recorded at a horrendous time in Lennon's life – he had separated from Yoko One just before recording sessions began, and his legal battle to remain in the USA was made more difficult by his political statements. The lyrics constantly refer to '*the people*' and the desire to '*change the world*', but Lennon sounds defensive rather than defiant, and on a recording of his Nutopian statement – another baffling proclamation of something or other – he sounds desperate.

On previous albums, even at his most experimental or obscure, there's a spark to Lennon's work – even the tub-thumping polemicals of *Some Time* are thunderous and energetic. But on *Mind Games* the production is weak, the mix poor and the songs themselves are among Lennon's worst. Only the title track stands out, and that one was originally written in 1969. The rest of the album includes tired boogie numbers, yet another song apologising to Yoko – the languid *Aisumasen (I'm Sorry)* – and, in the case of *Out Of The Blue*, a half-hearted rewrite of *Sexy Sadie*. In this drab company, the lite-jazzy *Intuition* stands out like a healthy thumb.

Perhaps that's why this reissue comes in a box full of new mixes – several CDs or vinyl LPs of Raw Mixes, Ultimate Mixes and Out-Takes, none of which add anything much other than a sense that one's ears have been syringed for no good reason. The remix of the (entirely silent) *Nutopian National Anthem* is a good joke, though.

David Quantick

Kiss

Creatures Of The Night 40th Anniversary Super Deluxe Edition UMR

Brash 80s hard rock behaviour revisited in a most lavish fashion.

Kiss are nobody sensible's idea of a great albums band, but their catalogue is littered with records that are much better than generally advertised. *Creatures Of The Night* is a case in point. Originally released in 1982, it was the New Yorkers' final album for Casablanca Records, and the last chance fans had to observe these handsome devils in full make-up. The following year they released *Lick It Up*, which had guitarist Vinnie Vincent wearing a cardigan on the cover. For that alone, *Creatures Of The Night* is the better deal, and this lavish 40th-anniversary (out by two years, but who's counting?) Super Deluxe Edition does little to argue otherwise.

The sound of rock and heavy metal was changing in the early 80s, becoming glossier and arguably more anaemic on a sonic level. Kiss were prime candidates to exploit that evolution. Their songs were purposefully simple and direct, their instrumentation little more than bare-bones. *Creatures Of The Night* fitted neatly into the world of Ozzy and Priest, albeit without any of their grit or humility.

Therein lies the charm, of course. As metal became brasher, Kiss ran towards it, with one eye on the burgeoning MTV phenomenon and another on the revered elder-statesmen status they clearly felt they deserved. Luckily, being cross-eyed did nothing to dent the band's ability to hack out a miraculous anthem or two, and *Creatures Of The Night* has two certified classics: the title track and the absurdly ebullient *I Like It Loud*. As evidence that Kiss were fully prepared to take on the 80s, they were perfect, and these remastered versions show them in their most dazzling light. *Creatures*' third bona fide gem is *War Machine*, perhaps the most Gene Simmonsy Gene Simmons song of them all. A big, dumb heavy metal song with a gold-plated main riff, it's still brilliant. The rest of *Creatures* is pretty good too. *Keep Me Comin'* and *Danger* are overlooked Paul Stanley ragers, *I Still Love You* is gloriously overwrought, and *Killer* is as dark and sinister as Kiss were ever likely to get.

For Kiss diehards, this Super Deluxe reissue is a gold mine, with a ludicrous amount of demos, rarities, out-takes and live material, all from 1982 and 1983. Spread across nine LPs (and one Blu-ray disc), this is a definitive snapshot of an important moment in the story of a band with plenty of hits but only a few full-length records of this quality.

Dom Lawson

Pavement

Cautionary Tales: Jukebox Classiques MATADOR

Whoa. Well, I'm salivating.

The complete seven-inch singles collection from the first (1989-1999) incarnation of the ultimate 90s US cult band: 18 records reproduced in the original sleeves, 56 songs, a 24-page threaded saddle-sewn booklet! The way Pavement fans are, there will be no copies of this left by the time it's up for grabs (available exclusively through mail order and limited to pre-orders).

It's all here, from 1989's fascinatingly noisy and self-released *Slay Tracks 1933-1969* EP where Mark E Smith's influence never sounded so pronounced again, through the gorgeous, era-defining Drag City and Matador singles *Summer Babe* (1991) and *Cut Your Hair* (1994) shot through with the grime and allure of NYC's Avenue B.

It's all here, through the Smashing Pumpkins-baiting, country-tinged *Range Life* (1994), the major-label-denying *Rattled By The Rush* (1995) and the wonderful jazz-tinged, free-flowing *Carrot Rope* (1999). Plus all those oblique and mysterious B-sides and bonus tracks.

There's little point denying that Pavement could have been as big as… well, Gavin Rossdale, but they were always a little too experimental, too fond of weird shapes and shadows, and a little too much in love with the notion of 'cool' for all that. No matter. They're still here, the fans still love them and… whoa, this is some set!

Everett True

Spiritualized

Songs In A&E FAT POSSUM

Remastered edition of Jason Pierce's deathbed fightback.

It's convenient to assume that Jason Pierce's sixth album as Spiritualized, released five years after *Amazing Grace* and following a near-death experience in hospital from pneumonia and periorbital cellulitis, was always intended as rock's most extravagant deathbed missive. In fact much of it was written prior to his hospitalisation, but the frailness of Pierce's vocal on the likes of orchestral lament *Sitting On Fire* hinted at lasting after-effects from his respiratory failure, and *Death Take Your Fiddle* was surely his most reaper-teasing song: '*Think I'll drink myself into a coma*,' he croaked over funereal country blues and the sounds of breath through respirator, '*death take your fiddle and play a song for me*'.

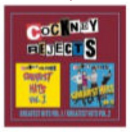
There are moments of gentle farewell and drifting away too – country lullabies like *Goodnight Goodnight* and *Don't Hold Me Close* (a duet with Rachel Korine), or oceanic shanty ballad *The Waves Crash In* – but much of the record sounds gloriously and/or voraciously alive. *Soul On Fire*, a slow dance around God's ballroom, ranks among Spiritualized's most spectacular blossom ballads, murderer's lament *Borrowed Your Gun* among their darkest crescendos. Angelic choirs and strings lift *Sweet Talk* to gospel glory, and the seven-minute *Baby I'm Just A Fool* builds from breezy country marimba drones into a satisfying avant-rock freak-out. Meanwhile, *You Lie You Cheat* is visceral revenge-rock, *Yeah Yeah* is frenetic space-skiffle, and *I Gotta Fire* a junkyard Stones. All in all, quite the resurrection.

Mark Beaumont

Cockney Rejects

Greatest Hits 1 & 2 Expanded CAPTAIN OI!

The very essence of Oi.



Both Cock Sparrer and Sham 69 may have come before them, but Cockney Rejects distilled what became known as the fusion of vehemently working-class punk rock and terrace anthems that rejected the McLaren/Rhodes axis of punk rock's art-school-derived situationist wankery. The punk sub-genre was in fact named Oi by noted cultural philistine and ex-*Sounds* music journalist Garry Bushell following his interpretation of initial Rejects lyrics.

The exhaustive early years compilation *Join The Rejects*, originally released in 2011, covered the band's full 1979-81 output. *Greatest Hits 1 & 2 Expanded* comprises that release's first two discs with 10 tracks bolted on (including the evocative provincial nostalgia of *Flares 'N' Slippers*). The band's highest-charting singles *The Greatest Cockney*

BRIAN BABINEAU/PRESS

Rip-Off and *I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles* are present and correct, plus of course Rejects signature tune the oven-baked aggro of *Oi! Oi! Oi!*, as well as fan favourites *I'm Not A Fool, Bad Man, Police Car* and *Fighting In The Street*.

Although it's a strictly back-catalogue affair, the Rejects are still a going concern as a studio/festival band, and what they really deserve is a full career retrospective. Their latest album, 2022's *Power Grab*, showcased their recent career evolution to a meaty NWOBHM-tinged rock format, but here it's the classics for those new to the band that bring home the bacon.

Alex Burrows

Dirty Pretty Things

Waterloo To Anywhere

UMR/PROPER

2006 debut back on wax.

When The Libertines appeared in the early noughties, The Clash's Mick Jones was smitten enough to produce their door-splintering debut album *Up The Bracket* in a style he called "rough, raw, raucous and exciting". Two years later, the UK's brightest antidote to Kaiser Chiefs-style 'stadium indie' buckled under frontman Pete Doherty's junkie antics, along with his friendship with Carl Barat.

Barat hooked up with Cooper Temple Clause bassist Didz Hammond, guitarist Anthony Rossamondo and Libs drummer Gary Powell to form Dirty Pretty Things, and released *Waterloo To Anywhere* in 2006. Produced in LA by Dave Sardy, its roughshod assault recalled *Up The Bracket*, Jones's words loudly applicable as Barat channelled his anger at Doherty poleaxing their band. *Waterloo's* a metaphor for final reckonings, lacerating first single *Bang Bang You're Dead* pulls no punches, *Doctors And Dealers* references 'cracked up eyes'. Always driven by the underrated Powell, *Last Of The Small Town Playboys* and *You Fucking Love It* navigate deceptively complex arrangements carried on a torrent of dissonant guitars conjuring the Velvet Underground syphoned through Richard Hell's Voidoids.

One more album and Dirty Pretty Things split too, but it's good having their rambunctious entry back again on heavyweight vinyl, timelessly kicking against any prick.

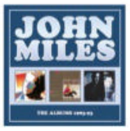
Kris Needs

John Miles

The Albums 1983 –1993

CHERRY RED

After-the-hits albums; kilometres off his best work.



When versatile Jarrow-born singer-musician Miles passed away in 2021, many fondly recalled his 1973 hit *Music*, an epic paean to his first and last love. Some also dug out pop gems like *Highfly* and *Slow Down*. In 1977 Miles had been hailed by *Melody Maker* as "the brightest, freshest force in British rock", and he toured with Elton John, the Stones and Fleetwood Mac. Yet with ruthless haste his 15 minutes of fame were deemed done by the 80s, so he regrouped as a backing player for Tina Turner and Jimmy Page.

This three-CD set of his last three studio albums won't inspire the canon to suddenly reassess the narrative. *Play On* (1983), produced by Gus Dudgeon, with the single *Song For You* a half-hearted stab at blue-eyed soul, lacks personality, while 1985's *Transition*, with collaborators including Trevor Rabin, strains to emote. The flailing *Blinded* is so scenery-chewingly, attention-cravingly over the top it makes *Music* sound like side two of Bowie's *Low*.

Miles tried again in '93, and *Upfront* is less desperate, if unspectacular. *What Goes Around* lands in Paul Carrack blues-soul territory, although *Now That The Magic Has Gone* is unwittingly on the nose. Hey, better to peak early than never.

Chris Roberts

Crime & The City Solution

Reissues MUTE

A mini-LP from 1985, a full one from '86.

When Crime & The City Solution first split in 1983, leader Simon Bonney swapped Melbourne for London and hooked up with the recently disintegrated Birthday Party's Howard brothers (Rowland S and touring member Harry) and Mick Harvey, plus Epic Soundtracks of the British post-punks Swell Maps, for a second spin of the C&TCS wheel.

Unlike the first incarnation, this one actually released music. The Flood-produced mini-album *Just South Of Heaven* (**7/10**), now reissued on sexy blue vinyl, pitched them as a slower, less ramshackle Birthday Party, with Bonney growling like a hoary bluesman. The following year's Flood-co-produced full-length album *Room Of Lights* (**8/10**) now on sexy yellow vinyl, spawned their career peak when the band found themselves guesting on the *Wings Of Desire* film, scorching their way through the especially grizzled *Six Bells Chime*. In the cold light of day, though, the stentorian *No Money, No Honey* and the presciently Bad Seeds-esque *Untouchable* were superior calling cards.

Alas for Bonney, with his band set fair, the Howard brothers and Soundtracks fled to form These Immortal Souls. C&TCS are still extant, but the sense of what might have been still looms large.

John Aizlewood

Joni Mitchell

The Asylum Albums (1976-1980) RHINO

Joni loves jazz.

One could argue that Joni Mitchell's Olympian period ends with the first disc in this box, as she, in her own words, moved from the hit department to the art department. *Hejira* (1976) is her last indisputable masterpiece, and a favourite of Mitchell herself, who felt it couldn't have come from anyone else. It's an exceptional album, unspoiled by anything close to ordinary, and *Coyote*, possibly about a one-night stand with playwright/actor Sam Shepard, *Furry Sings The Blues* with Neil Young on harmonica, and the gorgeous *Amelia*, an ode to aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart, are particularly great. Master jazz bassist Jaco Pastorius is as much the lead instrumentalist as Mitchell, and his unique touch, across this box, is even more prominent on these remasters.

Mitchell dived gleefully into deep experimentation on 1977's *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter*. The near-seven-minute percussion excursion *The Tenth World* tests the patience, but *Paprika Plains* – all of side two, much of it improvised – is astounding. *Talk To Me*, *Otis And Marlena* and superb failed single *Off Night Backstreet* also boost this underrated record. Little wonder that Björk found it inspiring. (It's also no surprise that the black-face cover art has been replaced. Even for the 70s it was an odd choice.)

Mingus (1979), a collaboration of sorts with bassist and bandleader Charles Mingus, is, frankly, an acquired taste. Of the four Mitchell/Mingus co-writes, *The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines* is a bit too hip and cool for its own good, and *A Chair In The Sky* and *Sweet Sucker Dance* meander aimlessly. Her addition of lyrics to *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat* is far from unpleasant, but it's not a patch on the original from his marvellous *Mingus Ah Um* album. Still, no Mitchell record is without redeeming features, and *The Wolf That Lives In Lindsey* stands out.

Shadows And Light (1980) is a strong live album on which a ridiculously great band featuring Pastorius, guitarist Pat Metheny and saxophonist Michael Brecker improve the Mingus material, and it's worth having for *Edith And The Kingpin* and a sparkling *In France They Kiss On Main Street* on their own.

Beautifully presented, including an essay from super-fan Meryl Streep, this box maintains the standard set by Mitchell's exemplary archival series, but such lavish reupholstering is what genius deserves.

Pat Carty

HENRY DILTZ/PRESS

Searching For Dexys Midnight Runners

Nige Tassell NINE EIGHT

Entertaining roll call of former Midnight Runners.

With a titular nod to Dexys' *Searching For The Young Soul Rebels* album (a similarly punk-adjacent, West Midlands-spawned debut to *Specials*, that saw passionate visionary Kevin Rowland doing for brass-driven soul exactly what Jerry Dammers had done for Jamaican ska), *Searching For Dexys Midnight Runners* chronicles long-time fan and investigative author of *Whatever Happened To The C86 Kids?* Nige Tassell's avowed quest to track down and interview literally dozens of former band members. Each protagonist gets a chapter wherein they tell their tale, from birth through Dexys years (sometimes only months) and subsequent careers to benefit-of-hindsight (if rarely rose-tinting) date.

It was a man's life in Dexys Midnight Runners, a collective that might have been sold as a gang but was, at best, a collaborative dictatorship under the sole control of the singularly driven Rowland. During their early-80s '*I will punish my body to believe in my soul*' heyday, not only were band members forbidden to drink, they were also forbidden to smile. From their earliest incarnation, rehearsals were assiduous. In a laissez-faire, can't play won't play, post-punk environment Dexys stood out. They were as tightly drilled as James Brown's Famous Flames and, with their *Mean Streets* De Niro image, physically intimidating.

"It was very hard work being in Dexys because we were such a miserable bunch of c**ts," says *SFTYSR*-era keyboard player Pete Saunders, hitting the nail squarely on the head. And it's not hard to see why. Rowland was, beyond doubt, some kind of pop genius, but he was also incredibly demanding. Imagine being forced to wear dungarees and not being allowed to smile about it? Let alone cry. His first thought when his new soul vision demanded a string section was to encourage his horn players to learn to play cello and violin. But on the whole Rowland's sidemen put up with his demands, and kept coming back for more, because Dexys were just so good.

Searching..., meanwhile is a pacy roll call of miscellaneous alumni, from the long-standing ('Big' Jim Patterson, Helen O'Hara, Kev 'Billy' Adams) to the bloke who played mandolin on *Don't Stand Me Down* (Julian Littman). Ex-Style Councillor Mick Talbot's also here, as is Status Quo/*Too-Rye-Ay*-era bassist John 'Rhino' Edwards, although sadly (spoiler alert) neither of the two key Kevins (Archer or Rowland) agreed to be interviewed. Which is a shame. A crushing disappointment, in fact.

Ian Fortnam

1967: How I Got There And Why I Never Left

Robyn Hitchcock CONSTABLE

A year in the life.

Robyn Hitchcock's career has never embraced the conventional. More often than not it has punched the conventional in the face and run away screaming. Even though the mainstream has sometimes veered towards him – there was the Jonathan Demme movie – Hitchcock has always managed to escape its clutches again. So it is no surprise that his new autobiography is not what you'd call a standard one.

As the title hints, it's set (almost entirely) in the year 1967, one that is significant to both fans of psychedelia, being that of the Summer Of Love, and the year both *Sgt. Pepper* and the first Pink Floyd records were released, and to Hitchcock, who at the age of 14 was sent to Winchester School.

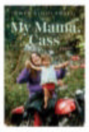
The book sets out to find the source of Robyn Hitchcock, the moment in his life when he became the man he is now. And it's fantastic, at once dreamy, sharp, funny and sad, and full of droll asides at the expense of local art lecturer Brian Eno.

David Quantick

My Mama, Cass

Owen Elliot-Kugell OMNIBUS

Mama Cass's daughter tells both their tales.



When Mamas & The Papas singer Mama Cass Elliot died in 1974, her daughter Owen Hendricks was just seven years old. Since then she's become Elliot-Kugell (her mother's nom-de-song Elliot as a legal formality, Kugell since marrying songwriter Jack Kugell), kept her mother's memory alive, and countered the myth that Cass choked to death on a ham sandwich.

For all its I-wasn't-there speculation, it's an engaging peep into the life of a singer who was poised to do more, and a daughter desperate to understand the mother she could never know. Cass (short for her childhood nickname Cassandra) Elliot (the surname of a dead friend) never came to terms with her weight, and she had a schoolgirl's approach to adult relationships. Her daughter, meanwhile, got lucky with her lovely extended family, rather less lucky with her own musical career, but she did raise the $40,000 it cost for her mother's star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame.

John Aizlewood

An Ideal For Living: A Celebration Of The EP

Core duBrowa and friends

HOZAK

Entertaining history of the Extended Play, featuring multiple contributors.

You might think that the distinction of the EP suffered with the advent of CDs and streaming. However, it turns out that since 2016, while LP sales suffered a 25 per cent drop, EP sales rose by the same percentage. Its appeal is perennial – financially expedient for artists, a 'taster' of a new act for uncertain fans. As Spoon's Britt Daniel puts it, the EP is "an escape route – a duck down the alley where no one is looking for you".

Much of this book is dedicated to capsule appraisals of the finest EPs of each decade from the 1950s onwards, reviewed by multiple critics. The range is impressively eclectic, from Edith Piaf to The Goons, Miles Davis to Donovan, Elvis Costello to Boards Of Canada. All bases are covered, including the bonus EP with Stevie Wonder's *Songs In The Key Of Life*. Thorough!

David Stubbs

A Mirror Of Dreams — The Progressive Rock Revival 1981-1983

Andrew Wild

KINGMAKER PUBLISHING

Market square heroes: in-depth analysis of the early-80s British prog scene.

Musicians might moan at the journalistic tendency to clump like-minded bands together in spurious 'scenes', but the truth is that most successful bands cut their teeth as part of a larger collective of similarly influenced ones.

Methodically researched with 85 interviews and more than 200 illustrations, *A Mirror Of Dreams* tells the story of the six interconnected groups – Marillion, IQ, Pallas, Pendragon, Solstice and Twelfth Night – that

BRIAN COOKE/GETTY

made up the early-80s UK prog scene, from sharing stages at spiritual home the Marquee ("It was a dump, but it was an iconic dump," says Pallas's Graeme Murray) to fleeting fame – Solstice had the cover of *Sounds* in January 1983 – to Marillion's sudden elevation to stardom.

With a second volume to follow, *A Mirror Of Dreams* is essential reading for anyone with a soft spot for *Kayleigh*.

■■■■■■■■□□

Paul Moody

Dream Machines: Electronic Music In Britain From Doctor Who To Acid House

Matthew Collin OMNIBUS PRESS

How the former future seized the mainstream.

No longer the plucky underdog on a mission to frighten the rock'n'roll establishment, electronic music is surely nowadays, at least in terms of popularity, the dominant force. And somewhat ubiquitous. Collin's book is savvy enough to realise that what might once have been the outsider music of experimentalists has taken centre stage. *Dream Machines* is a detailed history of the genre, covering in depth its ascent from musique concrete, through Joe Meek and Delia Derbyshire, all the way to rave culture and house. (Oddly, it chooses to be light on the present day.)

Any decades-spanning story that takes in prog, Roxy Music, 80s synth-pop, New Order, Kate Bush, Nitzer Ebb and UK hip-hop, using new interviews and quoting classic ones, can't help but fascinate. It's also strong on how unique Japan's *Tin Drum* album sounded even when synthesisers were the sound of the crowd in 1981.

A shrewd, cogent study.

■■■■■■■■□□

Chris Roberts

Postcards From Scotland: Scottish Independent Music 1983-1995

Grant McPhee OMNIBUS

How Scotland shaped indie, from the horses' mouths

Floppy of fringe and stripey of shirt, Scottish bands such as Orange Juice not only developed a specific look and sound for their local scene, they also helped to imprint the notion of what an indie band actually was around the UK.

This book is a companion piece to the 2017 documentary *Teenage Superstars*, an account of the Glaswegian scene, and it follows a similar oral-history format. With very little editorialising, McPhee allows talking heads from bands such as The Pastels, The Vaselines, Teenage Fanclub and the Jesus And Mary Chain, as well as Scottish record labels and promoters, to share their memories without interruption or opinion. Sometimes they contradict each other, but that's okay – it's the nature of how memories are experienced differently. As a format (which won't be for everyone) it is, fittingly, pretty punk rock, and it's a joy to follow the scene building under its own steam with little interference from the money men down in London. It's a true taste of independence.

■■■■■■■□□□

Emma Johnston

Under The Ivy: The Life And Music Of Kate Bush

Graeme Thomson OMNIBUS

This woman's work and world.

Graeme Thomson's highly praised, comprehensively researched book on Kate Bush now has another update in the light of 2014's live comeback and the interest generated by *Running Up That Hill*'s inclusion in Netflix drama *Stranger Things*.

Bush's Hammersmith Apollo spectaculars are examined in great detail, along with each album recording and her involvement with David Gilmour and Peter Gabriel. We get a glimpse of the woman behind the ethereal image and the Bush clan, who were taking care of business, according to observers, but unsurprisingly it doesn't penetrate the inner sanctum – so successful was Kate at guarding her privacy, her son Bertie was two years old before anyone outside her circle knew she'd become a mother.

What emerges from the camouflage is an artist so demanding and perfectionist that she didn't record or perform unless she could meet the high standards she set herself. That, and that she makes a great cup of tea.

■■■■■■■□□□

Claudia Elliott

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Emerson, Lake & Palmer: more chops than a butcher's fridge.

ELP

One of the great British prog bands, a power trio and a supergroup, they left a legacy that includes some classic prog-rock albums.

There was a time when British prog rock trio Emerson, Lake & Palmer were heralded, rightly, as one of the all-time prog-rock greats. There were also the times they were derided as a "waste of electricity" and the "definition of masturbatory excess and self-aggrandisement". Ah, success can be such a fickle mistress.

Success certainly found ELP. Even before the band formed, keyboard maestro Keith Emerson was a noted star in The Nice, bassist/vocalist Greg Lake the voice of King Crimson, and drummer Carl Palmer no slouch in either The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown or Atomic Rooster. But the combination of the three made for an explosively prodigious mix. Quite literally when it came to their second-ever live performance, at the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival, when the band set off two stage-side canons at the end of their set.

For the first four years of their existence, ELP could do no wrong. Their first four studio albums all made the UK Top 5, initially propelling the trio to the forefront of the prog-rock movement. Naturally, it couldn't last. Burned out by constant touring and releasing four studio and two live albums in an intense three-year period, ELP went on hiatus in 1974, doing what all rock stars do: buying big houses abroad and living the tax-exile life.

When they regrouped in 1976 it was into a different musical climate, not that ELP seemed to notice. Their comeback album, 1977's *Works Volume 1*, was a double with one side of band material and a side each for the musicians to show off their chops. With punk rock raging around them, ELP failed to read the room. An extensive US tour – with an orchestra – to support *Works* sucked up money at an alarming rate, while 1979's *Love Beach* has long been derided (even if it's not as bad as some say). The band gave up the ghost quietly as the 80s dawned.

Despite recording a great album with drummer Cozy Powell in 1986, Emerson, Lake & Powell fell apart after one US tour, but by 1990 offers were on the table, and ELP reunited and released *Black Moon* in 1992. The re-formation lasted until 1998, then the band reunited one final time to celebrate their 40th anniversary in 2010 at *Classic Rock*'s High Voltage Festival in some style.

Emerson took his own life in 2016, and Lake succumbed to cancer later the same year. The ever-youthful Carl Palmer still tours with his ELP Legacy band.

Jerry Ewing

Essential Classics

Brain Salad Surgery

MANTICORE, 1973

ELP's fourth studio album came housed in a sleeve designed by Swiss artist HR Giger (who designed the *Alien* creature), which played on the album title being roadie slang for fellatio. As one opened the elaborately die-cut sleeve, one was greeted by the image of Giger's wife, complete with the image of a phallus in her throat, leading to the band's label requesting that a new version look "less penisy".

Tellingly, the band flexed their own musical muscle on the album, with an epic take on Blake's *Jerusalem* and the balladic *Still… You Turn Me On,* while on the tripartite *Karn Evil 9* they hit prog-rock nirvana.

Trilogy

ISLAND, 1972

Less heralded than studio predecessor *Tarkus* (and wisely opting for the heads of the protagonists on the cover rather than an armadillo-tank hybrid), *Trilogy* might not feature a side-long epic, but it remains a more solid and consistent album in the band's canon, while sounding more assured than their debut. Lake's superlative and emotive *From The Beginning* and an unrestrained take on Aaron Copland's *Hoedown*, which would later prove to be a barnstorming show opener, are two high points, as are both the three-part title track and *The Endless Enigma*. It's the sound of a band about to take its first steps to megastardom.

DAVID GAHR/GETTY

Superior Reputation cementing

Emerson Lake & Palmer

Emerson, Lake & Palmer

ISLAND, 1970

The coming together of three already well-known musical members of the burgeoning progressive rock movement hit immediate headlines in 1970, and expectations were high. And ELP did not disappoint.

A mix of rock variations on classical works, such as *The Barbarian* and *Knife Edge*, and band-written material including Emerson's stellar *The Three Fates*, Lake's impressive *Take A Pebble* and a surprise hit single in the ballad *Lucky Man*.

As a debut it's not quite *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, but it's not far behind.

Pictures At An Exhibition

ISLAND, 1971

Although frequently listed among the band's studio albums, *Pictures At An Exhibition* is ELP's first live album, recorded at Newcastle City Hall in March 1971. The album is a perfect example of Emerson's long-held desire to fuse classical and rock music, in this instance Modest Mussorgsky's 1886 piano suite, which ELP had been performing ever since their live debut. These days the idea of a rock band delving into the classical world is hardly something new.

Despite Lake's worries that it may confuse fans, they sent *Pictures At An Exhibition* to No.3 in the UK and No.10 in the US.

Tarkus

ISLAND, 1971

Although their debut album bristled with expected ambition, on their second album, 1971's *Tarkus*, ELP threw caution to the wind, diving headfirst into the side-long title track, a combustive conceptual piece about the futility of conflict and revolution. It almost spit the band early in their career, owing to a row between Emerson and Lake, the latter feeling that the track was simply being clever for clever's sake.

In contrast, side two featured six shorter pieces, none of which captured the majesty of the title track, although the jazzy *Bitches Crystal* and the gentle *The Only Way (Hymn)* really stand out.

Emerson, Lake & Powell

POLYDOR, 1986

Purists might scoff, and no, Palmer isn't on it, but as the recent reissue of the one-off collaboration between Emerson, Lake and former Rainbow/ Whitesnake drummer Cozy Powell shows, this remains a very strong album, which helped connect the band of the 70s with the band that reunited for *Black Moon* in the 90s. It's a strong, heavy collection, the best of which was the strident *The Score, Touch And Go* and the take on Gustav Holst's *Mars*. A pity that in the mid-80s the idea of Emerson, Lake and Powell combining barely raised an interested glance.

Good Worth exploring

Welcome Back My Friends...

MANTICORE, 1974

As Yes had proved a year earlier with their triple album *Yessongs*, prog fans didn't just want to revel in the excess of the live performance, they wanted to enjoy it at home too. So ELP followed suit with their own triple-live offering capturing the band on tour in support of *Brain Salad Surgery* at a US show in 1974.

The album captures the live dynamism of ELP in their prime and remains a thrilling listen to this day as they roar through the best songs from their first four albums. Little wonder *Welcome Back My Friends To The Show That Never Ends – Ladies And Gentlemen* is ELP's highest-charting album in the US.

Works Volume 1

ATLANTIC, 1977

ELP's much-heralded reunion album following their mid-70s hiatus gave the band a surprise No.2 hit single in the UK with an edited version of their rampaging cover of Aaron Copland's *Fanfare For The Common Man*. However, punk rock was all the rage in the summer of '77, so it was hardly zeitgeist-grabbing stuff.

Bearing that in mind, the band's decision for *Works Volume 1* to be a double album offering each member a whole side to show off on was misguided, however good Emerson's *Piano Concerto* and Lake's *C'est La Vie* were. The band-written *Pirates* is an absolute masterpiece, however.

Black Moon

VICTORY MUSIC, 1992

The clamour for the return of Emerson Lake & Palmer had grown louder as the 90s approached. This didn't go unnoticed by former Atlantic Records exec Phil Carson, who got the three band members together for writing sessions that turned out to be more than fruitful. Securing a deal with his then label Victory, the band's comeback album, *Black Moon*, is a far stronger album than it's sometimes given credit for, especially the emphatic title track and their take on Prokofiev's *Romeo And Juliet*. Had it been released in today's more prog-friendly climate, people would be really raving about it.

Avoid

In The Hot Seat

VICTORY MUSIC, 1994

We're sure many were expecting 1979's *Love Beach*, ELP's 70s swansong, to be in this slot, but no matter how bad that record's cover is, and some of the shorter songs on side one are, it still has *Cannario* and the conceptual *Memoirs Of An Officer And A Gentleman*.

In The Hot Seat found the band in ill-health – literally, with Palmer suffering carpal tunnel syndrome, and Emerson problems with his ulnar nerve, meaning he had to overdub his right-hand parts with his left hand. With the band unprepared and preoccupied, little wonder the album's collection of short, tepid rock songs was described by Palmer as "dreadful".

Essential Playlist

Take A Pebble
Emerson, Lake & Palmer

Lucky Man
Emerson, Lake & Palmer

Tarkus
Tarkus

The Great Gates Of Kiev
Pictures At An Exhibition

From The Beginning
Trilogy

Trilogy
Trilogy

Jerusalem
Brain Salad Surgery

Still... You Turn Me On
Brain Salad Surgery

Karn Evil 9
Brain Salad Surgery

Hoedown
Welcome Back My Friends

Fanfare For The Common Man
Works Vol. 1

Pirates
Works Vol. 1

Tiger In A Spotlight
Works Vol. 2

The Score
Emerson, Lake & Powell

Touch And Go
Emerson, Lake & Powell

Black Moon
Black Moon

Bitches Crystal
Tarkus

The Endless Enigma
Trilogy

Trilogy
Trilogy

THE UNDERTONES
OCTOBER 2024 and friends
Thursday 10 Liverpool Hangar 34*
Friday 11 Sunderland Fire Station*
Saturday 12 Sheffield Leadmill*
*RUTS DC
Thursday 17 Lincoln Engine Shed+
Friday 18 Norwich Epic+
Saturday 19 Wolverhampton KK's+
+THE REZILLOS
Thursday 24 Frome Cheese & Grain #
Friday 25 London Camden Electric Ballroom #
Saturday 26 Southampton 1865#
#PETE WYLIE & THE MIGHTY WAH!

Toyah & Robert
27 JUL ULVERSTON
THE CORO
30 AUG WARRINGTON
PARR HALL
17 DEC SUNDERLAND
THE FIRE STATION
22 DEC WOLVERHAMPTON
THE WULFRUN
"CLASSIC ROCK IN THE COMPANY OF TWO ROCK LEGENDS AND THEIR BAND!"

WISHBONE ASH
TWIN GUITARS - CLASSIC ROCK
TWIN GUITARS - CLASSIC ROCK
FEATURING SONGS FROM LIVE DATES II
21:09 CHESTER LIVE ROOMS
23:09 LYTHAM LOWTHER PAVILION
24:09 SOUTHPORT ATKINSON
26:09 CARLISLE OLD FIRE STATION
27:09 GLASGOW ORAN MOR
03:10 LEEDS BRUDENELL
04:10 HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
05:10 BURY MET THEATRE
07:10 BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX
09:10 LINCOLN DRILL
10:10 WALSALL ARENA
11:10 RUGBY BENN HALL
21:10 CARDIFF TRAMSHED
22:10 GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
23:10 NEWBURY ARLINGTON ARTS
24:10 ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL
ASHCON 2024 WISHBONE ASH CONVENTION
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05 OCT EDINBURGH QUEENS HALL
06 OCT HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
08 OCT CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION
09 OCT MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2
10 OCT NEW BRIGHTON FLORAL PAVILION
11 OCT WOLVERHAMPTON WULFRUN
12 OCT CARDIFF TRAMSHED
14 OCT BATH KOMEDIA
15 OCT PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL
16 OCT LONDON O2 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE
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25 SEP LINCOLN THE DRILL
26 SEP NORWICH THE WATERFRONT
17 NOV CHESTER THE LIVE ROOMS
1 DEC LEEDS BRUDENELL

LIVE!

The High-Voltage What's On Guide

Edited By Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)

P92 Interviews
P97 Tour Dates
P101 Live Reviews

P102

The Black Crowes

With top tunes, slick performances and a special guest appearance, they deliver a rock'n'roll master class.

ROSS HALFIN

Manic Street Preachers

Nicky Wire talks about the upcoming tour, Richey Edwards, Rush and the band's next album.

Formed in 1986 by four schoolmates from Blackwood in South Wales, the Manic Street Preachers were devastated when almost a decade later guitarist and lyricist Richey Edwards vanished mysteriously (he was later presumed dead). Continuing as a trio with their fourth album, 1996's *Everything Must Go*, they flourished by adopting a more mature sound. Bassist Nicky Wire previews their upcoming tour.

It's hilarious to think that the master plan of the Manics amounted to releasing a debut album that would outsell *Appetite For Destruction*, then split instantly.
There's still a chance that could happen [laughs]. Ah, the power, optimism and delusion of youth.

What would Richey Edwards make of the fact that the Manics are still here all these decades down the line, making chart-topping albums and headlining arenas?
That's a strange one to consider. He'd probably like the records that we do, and I suspect we'd still be having conversations about lyrics. In Richey's era the biggest gig we did was Brixton Academy. He'd probably enjoy the idea of us walking out on stage at the Millennium Stadium [in Cardiff] in front of sixty thousand people – at least once, anyway.

The past five years have provided a lot of priceless subject matter for a socially aware band. As two of the most important elections of our age approach, will the next album be a bit of a hand grenade?
To be honest, I'm just racked with self-loathing and criticism. I'm less into lacerating the world that surrounds us and more doing that to myself.

Could you explain that statement.
As you get older the writing becomes nuanced and the brain and the body slow down. I don't want to be that bloke in the corner of the pub, raging and pretending to know the answers to things.

Given the divisive that way our politicians behave, isn't it hard to bite your tongue?
I don't know. I just do things in a more controlled way. I'm a pretty divisive person myself. Look, I would love to still be that gobshite singing *Nat West Barclays Lloyds*, but that was back in 1990.

The band's last album, 2021's *The Ultra Vivid Lament*, featured one of the last vocal performances from Mark Lanegan. Fashionably late, I just read Lanegan's book *Sing Backwards And Weep*. Talk about unflinchingly honest.
Isn't it just? We go back a long way with Mark.

POLLY THOMAS/GETTY

We supported Oasis and The Screaming Trees in America in 1997. Richey was a huge Screaming Trees fan, but Mark wasn't in the best of states on that tour. He did a fantastic job for us on that song, and, sadly, not too long afterwards he was gone.

As a huge Rush fan, presumably you bought Geddy Lee's book on the day it came out?
I interviewed Geddy in Wolverhampton on his book tour, so I have a signed copy. That was a thrill of a lifetime. Some of its revelations – the drug side of Rush – made me think: "What the fuck?" I'm not a huge reader of biographies, but Geddy's was such a harrowing read at times, with what his parents went through [in Auschwitz], and saying goodbye to Neil Peart for the last time. I just couldn't put that one down.

Should Geddy and Alex get a new drummer?
I don't think it'll happen. Would I like to see it? I don't know. Neil was such a brilliant lyricist, it wouldn't be the same. I struggle to get on stage at fifty-five, so what must it be like for those guys?

Do you have a memoir inside, bursting to get out?
There's a book, but it's all about timing. That's probably why Geddy was so honest in his own, Rush are pretty much finished. I've written quite a bit for mine, but I don't know if I fancy putting it out while we are still a living organism as a band.

The Manics have been working on their fifteenth album. How is it coming along?
The recording is ninety per cent done, but we haven't mixed it yet. It will be out in January or February of next year.

What will it sound like?
It has a lot of energy, even though I don't feel particularly energised. One of the songs is like a mixture of The Cardigans and The Skids, who are two of our favourite bands, and another sounds like *Come Up And See Me* [by Cockney Rebel] played by Dinosaur Jr.

There's also a twentieth-anniversary reboot of the Manics' *Lifeblood* coming, which includes a Steven Wilson remix of its lead track *1985*.
Steven is the king of spatial audio. We had mixed a track for him and he returned the favour by doing one for us. He's great at what he does, he's amazingly selfless.

Back then the band feared that the experimental *Lifeblood* might turn out to be their last album.
It's true. Much as we loved making that record, instinct told me *Lifeblood* would be our worst-performing album. That stuff mattered a lot back then, not so much these days.

The Manics' upcoming tour is a co-headliner with indie-rockers Suede. Why is that pairing an attractive package?
Both bands come from a similar place, comfortably on the outside and never really part of anything. There's a shared survival instinct that comes from the ups and downs of being in a band. We've done eighty thousand tickets in the UK, which suggests to me there's a lot of people that want to see it. **DL**

The tour ends in London on July 18.

SCOTT DUDELSON/GETTY

Love Feat. Johnny Echols

Hear *Forever Changes* in full, orchestrated at some shows.

Johnny Echols, co-founding guitarist of the group Love, returns with the members of Baby Lemonade, the longest-serving band of late, great Love vocalist Arthur Lee. Expect to hear Love's classic 1967 album *Forever Changes* in its entirety.

The last time you spoke to *Classic Rock*, back in 2019, was in promotion of what was being billed as a 'farewell tour'. You explained that on the band's previous visit, a third of the proceeds had "vanished into a hole" – and this was before Brexit.
We've been back a couple of time since then, and the band is now playing larger Academy venues, which makes things much easier business-wise. There's such demand, we have decided to keep on playing until people don't want to see us any more.

Could that sentiment extend to new music?
It will. There are several songs that we worked on with Arthur [Lee, who died in 2006]. We have removed everything but Arthur's ethereal lead voice, and we are playing along with that. One is called *My String Serenade*. Those songs will form the basis of a new album to be released some time next year.

You believe Arthur Lee would have been happy with this continuation of Love.
I know that for a fact, because Arthur asked me to keep the band going. We had been lifelong friends, and I visited him several times in hospital during his final days. He said: "Why don't you guys do this until I'm ready to continue?" That was Arthur's way of articulating that he wanted Love to continue even after he passed.

It seems mind-boggling that disappointing original sales of *Forever Changes*, belatedly recognised as one of the coolest and most influential albums of the era, caused Lee to sack all of the band – including you.
That isn't what happened at all. During the recording of *Forever Changes* there was a lot of discord. We had been promised a double album, so that Bryan [MacLean, guitarist], Arthur and myself would have a side each. We were tired of being in Arthur's shadow and not getting any credit. When Jac Holzman [Elektra Records boss] told us that a double would be too expensive, Bryan got really upset and stopped doing the little things that made Arthur's songs sound so great, so Holzman offered him a deal for a solo record. When Arthur found out he said: "That's great – you're fired." That's how the group ended.

The centrepiece of the forthcoming tour is *Forever Changes* in full, performed with the Stockholm Strings 'N' Horns Ensemble. That will bring out the full beauty and subtlety of those songs.
There will be strings and horns at several gigs, right now I don't know how many. Shepherd's Bush Empire in London is one, that's for sure. For the ones that don't we have a keyboardist who is able to emulate those sounds, and there will also be a trumpet player. We do an incredible version of *Forever Changes*, close your eyes and you're listening to the record.

In August you have a slightly unusual slot at Rebellion, a punk festival.
Some of the music from our first album [*Love*, 1966] was very minimalist, with no overdubs whatsoever, and we'll be playing a very specific set that day so I expect us to fit right in. **DL**

Love's tour begins on July 10.

The Pretty Reckless

Supporting the Rolling Stones and AC/DC in the same week? Sounds like a pretty good week.

Fronted by model/actress-turned-singer and rhythm guitarist Taylor Momsen, The Pretty Reckless formed in New York City in 2009. With their critically praised fourth album, 2021's *Death By Rock And Roll*, the quartet ventured beyond alt.rock boundaries to embrace a more mature sound. Momsen previews the band's European tour as guests of AC/DC.

How did you greet the news that The Pretty Reckless will be opening for AC/DC?
One of the band members was driving when he heard, and he almost crashed his car [laughs]. Here's a great story. Last November my agent asked me about touring. We were starting to make a record, and told him no – not unless AC/DC, The Who or the Rolling Stones called.

Christmas and New Year passed, and we were in the studio. Then I get a text from Neil [Warnock, the agent] that says: 'AC/DC, plus The Pretty Reckless. All [European] shows.' And I go: 'Oh shit.' So we put the record on hold, and I guess we *are* going on tour.

That's amazing.
Yeah, but here's the thing. A week ago, the Rolling Stones called too. We are playing a stadium with the Stones in Las Vegas, then flying to Germany to join a tour with AC/DC in the same week. My mind is truly blown.

AC/DC's audiences can be pretty unforgiving of support acts. Does that bother you?
We just get up there and do our thing. In that sense we have the same ethic as AC/DC. We're loud – almost a bar band at the core. I can't control how others view or perceive us, so I'm not really worried. I get to play music and then watch my favourite band every night. What's not to love?

You quit acting for music at the age of fourteen. What was the reason?
Being in bands and writing songs was something I'd done since before I could even remember, but finally I reached an age where I realised I *could* do it. It was a bit of a fight to quit my day job, but I did it and it was the best decision I ever made.

There's probably a type of person who thinks of you as 'playing at' music, rather than playing it.
Actually, I think the hate and negativity has kind of gone away. I was on a TV show that was a hit across the world [*Gossip Girl*], but we've been a band for almost sixteen years, we've toured the world relentlessly and made four records. To all those people who doubted us… [laughs] did I mention we are touring with AC/DC? You don't get an AC/DC tour for being on a television show. It comes from paying your dues.

Kim Thayil and Matt Cameron from Soundgarden both guested on The Pretty Reckless's most recent album, *Death By Rock And Roll*, as did Audioslave's Tom Morello. Do these elder statesmen offer advice?
Not really. We just play music together. I don't see music as a business. It really isn't like that any more.

The *Death By Rock And Roll* album seemed to take The Pretty Reckless up several levels.
I really like all of our records, but *Death By Rock And Roll* is my favourite.

Of the track *Harley Darling*, *Classic Rock* said: "If someone said this song had fallen off Neil Young's *Harvest* sessions, you'd believe it."
That's an amazing compliment. Thank you.

When might we hear the follow-up?
The record's on hold, but we'll get right back on to it when we finish this tour.

Our legendary older bands are retiring, and older heroes passing away – the latest, recently, was Dickey Betts from the Allman Brothers.
That was devastating. We had Warren Haynes [former Allmans guitarist, now with Gov't Mule] play on *Back To The River* from our record *Who You Selling For* [2016].

Do you feel a responsibility towards keeping rock'n'roll alive?
Rock'n'roll *is* alive, and I need it to stay that way. So if I can contribute to that, it's what I'm going to do. **DL**

The Pretty Reckless support AC/DC in London on July 3 and 7, and in Dublin on August 17.

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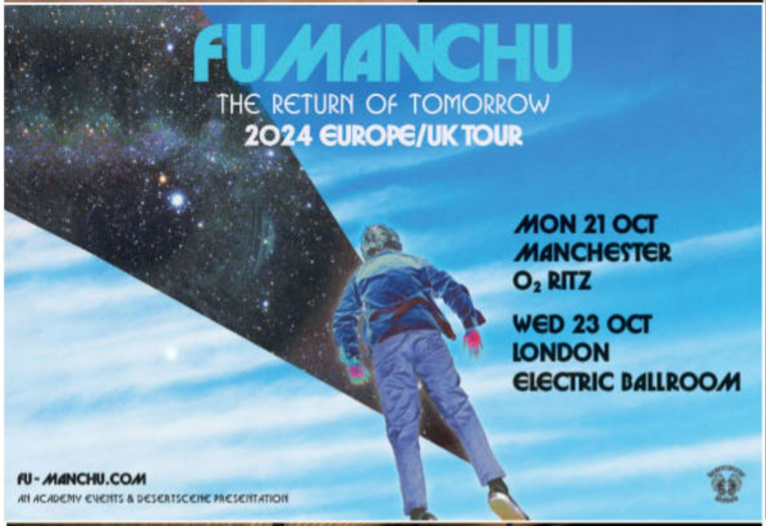

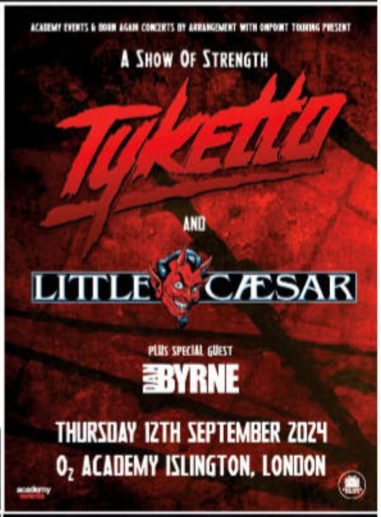

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Tour Dates

AC/DC, THE PRETTY RECKLESS

London	Wembley Stadium	Jul 3, 7
Dublin	Croke Park	Aug 17

ALIEN ANT FARM, CKY

Margate	Dreamland	Oct 9
Southampton	1865	Oct 10
Bristol	Academy	Oct 12
Torquay	Foundry	Oct 13
Norwich	Epic Studios	Oct 15
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 16
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 17
Newcastle	NX	Oct 18
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 20
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 21
Bradford	Nightrain	Oct 22
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Oct 23
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 24

ARMORED SAINT

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Aug 13
Manchester	Rebellion	Aug 14
Wolverhampton	KK's Steelmill	Aug 16
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Aug 17
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Aug 18

BAD TOUCH

Hastings	The Carlisle	Aug 23

ELLES BAILEY

Lincoln	Drill Hall	Sep 25
Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 26
Cambridge	Cambridge Junction	Sep 27
Oxford	Academy 2	Sep 28
Carlisle	Blues Festival	Oct 11
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 12
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Oct 24
Bristol	SWX	Oct 26
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 2
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Nov 3
Sunderland	Fire Station	Nov 14
Edinburgh	Cabaret Voltaire	Nov 15
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Nov 16
Chester	Live Rooms	Nov 17
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 30
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Dec 1

BATTLE BEAST, BRYMIR

Southampton	1865	Sep 27
London	Camden Electric Brixton	Sep 28
Birmingham	XOYO	Sep 29
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 30
Manchester	Academy 2	Oct 1
Bristol	Marble Factory	Oct 3

BEAUX GRIS GRIS AND THE APOCALYPSE

Leamington Spa	Temperance	Jul 19
Cambridge	Junction 2	Jul 24
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Jul 25
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jul 26

BLAZE BAYLEY

Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Sep 18
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 19
Manchester	Club Academy	Sep 20
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 21
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 22

BIG BIG TRAIN

Swindon	Wyvern Theatre	Sep 17
Newport	Riverfront	Sep 18
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	Sep 19
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Sep 21
Newark	Palace Theatre	Sep 22
Wavendon	The Stables	Sep 24
Manchester	Stoller Hall	Sep 25
London	Cadogan Hall	Oct 5

BLACKBERRY SMOKE, THE STEEL WOODS

Glasgow	Academy	Sep 9
Edinburgh	Academy	Sep 10
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 12
Birmingham	Academy	Sep 13
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Sep 14

BLITZKRIEG, DESPERATE MEASURES

London	New Cross Inn	Jun 21
Hastings	The Carlisle	Jun 22

BODYCOUNT

London	Kentish Town Forum	Jun 30
Manchester	The Ritz	Jul 1
Glasgow	SWG3	Jul 2

BRAVE RIVAL

Cranbrook	Queens Hall	Jun 22
Chippenham	The Pewson	Jun 29

Wolverhampton	Giffard Arms	Jul 5
Nottingham	Bodega	Aug 2
Oxford	The Bullingdon	Aug 16
Petersfield	Festival Hall	Aug 31
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 6
London	Camden Dingwalls	Sep 12
Derby	Flowerpot	Sep 26
Southampton	The Brook	Sep 27
Hastings	The Carlisle	Oct 4
Frome	Tree House	Oct 5

Recommended

THE BREEDERS

Leeds	Academy	Jun 24
London	Limehouse Troxy	Jun 25
Manchester	Albert Hall	Jun 26

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

BROTHERS OSBORNE

Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Jan 17
Belfast	Ulster Hall	Jan 18
Glasgow	Academy	Jan 21
Newcastle	City Hall	Jan 23
Manchester	Apollo	Jan 25
Leeds	Academy	Jan 26
Birmingham	Academy	Jan 28
Bristol	Academy	Jan 29
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jan 30

BULLET FOR MY VALENTINE, TRIVIUM

Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Jan 26, 27
Glasgow	Hydro	Jan 28
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jan 30
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jan 31
London	O2 Arena	Feb 1

CARDINAL BLACK

Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 8
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 9
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 11
Manchester	Gorilla	Oct 16
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 17
Birmingham	Asylum	Oct 18
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 19
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Oct 24
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Oct 25
Dublin	Whelans	Nov 5
Belfast	Empire	Nov 6
Bath	Komedia	Nov 8
Falmouth	Princess Pavilion	Nov 9
Reading	Sub 89	Nov 15
Brighton	The Arch	Nov 16
Cardiff	Tramshed	Jan 18

THE COLD STARES

Hastings	The Carlisle	Aug 30
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Aug 31
Birmingham	Sunflower Lounge	Sep 1
Southampton	1865	Sep 3
London	New Cross Inn	Sep 4
Sittingbourne	Bourne Music Club	Sep 5

ALICE COOPER, THE MEFFS

Glasgow	OVO Arena	Oct 14
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 16
Manchester	AO Arena	Oct 17
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 18
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 20, 21

THE CULT

Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Oct 21
Swansea	Arena	Oct 22
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 24
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 25
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 27
York	Barbican	Oct 29
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 30
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Nov 1
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Nov 2
London	Royal Albert Hall	Nov 4

ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM

Bedford	Esquires	Jun 21
London	Camden Dingwalls	Jun 22

CURVED AIR

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Aug 15
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Aug 18

THE DEAD DAISIES, THE TREATMENT, THE BITES

Brighton	Chalk	Sep 6
Torquay	The Foundry	Sep 7
Southampton	1865	Sep 8

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

CARDINAL BLACK

The Welsh rockers have been hotly tipped for a while. Get along to a show and see for yourself what the fuss is about.

See below for dates. Currently October 8 to January 18.

Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Sep 10
Glasgow	SWG3	Sep 11
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 13
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 14
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Sep 15
Manchester	The Ritz	Sep 17
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Sep 18
Bristol	Academy	Sep 20
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 21

DEEP PURPLE, REEF

Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Nov 4
London	O2 Arena	Nov 6
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 7
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 9
Glasgow	OVO Hydro	Nov 10

DELAIN, STONE BROKEN, DAMIAN WILSON

Glasgow	Garage	Nov 15
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 16
Belfast	Limelight 2	Nov 18
Dublin	Academy	Nov 19
Manchester	New Century	Nov 21
Bristol	SWX	Nov 22
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 23

DEMON

Crumlin	The Patriot	Oct 18
London	Camden Underworld	Oct 19

PAUL DI'ANNO, GYPSY'S KISS

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Aug 21
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Aug 22
Newark	Stonedead Festival Party	Aug 23
Crumlin	The Patriot	Aug 25
Swindon	The Vic	Aug 26

DREAM THEATER

London	O2 Arena	Oct 20

EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 11

SAMANTHA FISH

Birmingham	Town Hall	Oct 4
Brighton	Chalk	Oct 5
London	Camden Koko	Oct 6
Norwich	Epic Studios	Oct 7
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 8
Bath	Komedia	Oct 9
Leeds	Project House	Oct 10
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 11
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Oct 12
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Oct 13

FM

Cambridge	Rock Festival	Aug 2
Hastings	The Carlisle	Oct 17
Whitby	Rock Festival	Nov 8
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Nov 9

FOO FIGHTERS

Manchester	Old Trafford	Jun 13, 15
Glasgow	Hampden Stadium	Jun 17
London	Stadium	Jun 20, 21
Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jun 25
Birmingham	Villa Park	Jun 27

FU MANCHU

Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 21

Bristol	Marble Factory	Oct 22
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 23

LIAM GALLAGHER

Dublin	3 Arena	Jun 23, 24
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jun 27, 28

GARBAGE

Glasgow	TRNSMT Festival	Jul 12
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Jul 14
Bridlington	Spa	Jul 15
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Jul 17
Manchester	Apollo	Jul 19
London	Wembley Arena	Jul 20

THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM

Sheffield	Academy	Jun 21
Manchester	Apollo	Jun 22
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Jun 23
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Jun 25, 26
Dublin	3 Olympia	Jun 29
Nottingham	Rock City	Jul 10
Cheltenham	2000 Trees Festival	Jul 11

DAVID GILMOUR

London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 9-12, 14, 15

GONG

Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Aug 16

GRETA VAN FLEET

London	Royal Albert Hall	Jul 14

GREEN DAY

Manchester	Old Trafford	Jun 21
Isle Of Wight	Festival	Jun 23
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 25
Dublin	Marlay Park	Jun 27
London	Wembley Stadium	Jun 29

GREEN LUNG

Derbyshire	Bloodstock Festival	Aug 9
Southampton	Papillon	Aug 10

GUN

London	King's Cross Scala	Dec 4
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 5
Manchester	Academy 2	Dec 6
Bristol	SWX	Dec 7
Southampton	The Brook	Dec 8
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Dec 10
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Dec 11
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Dec 12
Galashiels	Mac Arts	Dec 13
Glasgow	Barrowland Ballroom	Dec 14

AN EVENING WITH HAKEN

Manchester	The Ritz	Sep 20
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 21

PJ HARVEY, BIG THIEF, TIRZAH, SHIDA SHAHABI

London	Gunnersbury Park	Aug 18

HAWKWIND

Bath	Forum	Aug 16
Faversham	A New Fay Festival	Aug 17

HEKZ

Bedford	Esquires	Jun 28

LORNE THOMSON/GETTY

LIVE!

London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Sep 20
Southampton	1865	Oct 22

HILLBILLY VEGAS, THE HOWLING TIDES

Hull	Adelphi	Jul 17
Newcastle	Trillians	Jul 18
Crumlin	The Patriot	Jul 19
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Jul 21
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jul 24
Hastings	The Carlisle	Jul 25
Sittingbourne	The Appleyard	Jul 27

IN FLAMES, ARCH ENEMY, SOILWORK

Glasgow	Academy	Oct 3
Manchester	Academy	Oct 4
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 5
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 6

JADIS

Southampton	1865	Jun 22

TOBY JEPSON, WORDS & ACOUSTIC

Huddersfield	Parish	Jun 21
Hull	The Welly	Jun 22
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Jun 24, 25

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

Sittingbourne	Appleyard	Nov 20
Brighton	Komedia	Nov 21
Bath	Komedia	Nov 22
Southampton	1865	Nov 23
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Nov 25
Glasgow	St Luke's	Nov 26
Cambridge	Junction	Nov 27
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 28
Oxford	Academy 2	Nov 30
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 1

LAURENCE JONES

Wimborne	Tivoli	Sep 6
London	Putney Half Moon	Sep 8
Birmingham	Jam House	Oct 23
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 24
Crumlin	The Patriot	Oct 25

JOURNEY, CHEAP TRICK

Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Oct 30
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Oct 31
Glasgow	Hydro	Nov 2
Belfast	SSE Arena	Nov 4
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 5
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 8
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 9
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Nov 11
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Nov 13
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Nov 16
London	O2 Arena	Nov 17

THE KARMA EFFECT

Hastings	The Carlisle	Jul 12
Newcastle	Zerox	Sep 4
Glasgow	Garage Attic	Sep 5
Guildford	Boileroom	Sep 8
Frome	Tree House	Sep 11
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Sep 12
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Sep 13
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Sep 15
Huddersfield	Parish	Sep 18
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 19
Plymouth	Underground	Sep 21
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Sep 22
London	Camden Black Heart	Sep 26
Manchester	Factory 251	Sep 27

Recommended

MYLES KENNEDY, DEVIN TOWNSEND

Glasgow	SWG3 Galvanizers	Nov 25
Manchester	Academy	Nov 27
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 29
Birmingham	Academy	Nov 30
Cardiff	Great Hall	Dec 2
London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 4

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

KERBDOG

Kilkenny	Set Theatre	Sep 20
Cork	Cyprus Avenue	Sep 21
Belfast	Limelight 2	Sep 28
Dublin	Academy	Oct 12

MARCUS KING

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 5
Manchester	Albert Hall	Nov 6
Glasgow	Barrowland	Nov 7
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 9
Cardiff	Great Hall	Nov 10
Dublin	Olympia	Nov 12

DAVID ELLEFSON AND JEFF YOUNG IN KINGS OF THRASH

London	Camden Underworld	Oct 24
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 26

Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Oct 27
Edinburgh	La Belle Angele	Oct 28
Dublin	Opium Live!	Oct 29
Belfast	Limelight	Oct 30
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 1
Manchester	Academy 3	Nov 2

JIM KIRKPATRICK BAND

Kinross	Green Hotel	Oct 10
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Oct 11
Newcastle	Cluny 2	Oct 12
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 13

KK'S PRIEST

Cardiff	Tramshed	Aug 18
Belfast	Limelight	Aug 20
Dublin	Academy	Aug 21
Newcastle	NX	Aug 23
Newark	Stonedead Festival	Aug 24

KORN, DENZEL CURRY, SPIRITBOX

London	Gunnersbury Park	Aug 11

RICHIE KOTZEN

Belfast	Limelight	Jul 10
Dublin	Opium Live	Jul 11
London	Islington Academy	Jul 13

THE LAZYS

Manchester	Star & Garter	Aug 29
Bradford	Nightrain	Aug 30
Buckley	Tivoli	Aug 31
London	Camden Black Heart	Sep 1

THE LEMON TWIGS

Cardiff	Globe	Aug 30
Oxford	Academy	Sep 2
Bristol	Thekla	Sep 3
Brighton	Concorde 2	Sep 4
London	Brixton Electric	Sep 5
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Sep 7
Newcastle	The Grove	Sep 9
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Sep 10
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Sep 11
Manchester	Academy 2	Sep 12
Dublin	Button Factory	Sep 14

THE LONG RYDERS

Glasgow	Oran More	Oct 10
Birkenhead	Futureyard	Oct 11
Leeds	Old Woollen	Oct 12
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Oct 13
Nottingham	Metronome	Oct 14
Bristol	The Fleece	Oct 15
London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	Oct 16
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Oct 17
Hastings	The Piper	Oct 18

LOVE FEATURING JOHNNY ECHOLS

Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Jul 10
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Jul 11
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Jul 12
Liverpool	Academy 2	Jul 13
Guildford	Boileroom	Jul 15
Southampton	1865	Jul 17
Brighton	Concorde 2	Jul 18
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jul 20
Newcastle	Gosforth Civic	Jul 24
Edinburgh	The Caves	Jul 25
Glasgow	St Luke's	Jul 26
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Jul 29
Bristol	The Fleece	Aug 1
Cardiff	Earl Haig Club	Aug 2
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Aug 3

MAMMOTH WVH, THE DUST CODA

Birmingham	Institute 2	Jul 8
London	Islington Academy	Jul 9

MANIC STREET PREACHERS, SUEDE

Llangollen	International Musical Eisteddfod	Jun 28
Dublin	Trinity College	Jul 2
Cardiff	Castle	Jul 5
Edinburgh	Castle	Jul 10
Manchester	Castlefield Bowl	Jul 12
Leeds	Millennium Square	Jul 13
London	Alexandra Palace Park	Jul 18

NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS

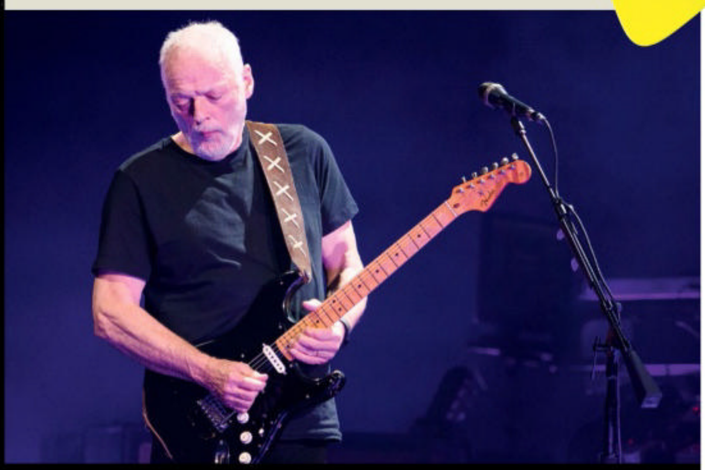
Glasgow	SEC	Jun 21
Gateshead	The Glasshouse	Jun 22
Cardiff	Millenium Centre	Jun 24
Poole	Lighthouse	Jun 25
Brighton	Dome	Jun 26
Ipswich	Regent	Jun 28
London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 29

ANDY McCOY BAND, CONTINENTAL LOVERS

Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Sep 11
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Sep 12
Bradford	Nightrain	Sep 13
Newcastle	Think Tank	Sep 14
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Sep 15
Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 16

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

DAVID GILMOUR



The former Pink Floyd man has a new album in September, so expect some of that. Floyd songs? He'll likely play a few.

London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 9-12, 14, 15

Brighton	The Arch	Sep 18
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 19
Swansea	The Bunkhouse	Sep 20

CHANTEL McGREGOR

Bradford	Tapestry	Jun 21
Hastings	The Carlisle	Jul 5
Linton	Blues Festival Jun	Jul 6
Worthing	The Factory Live	Jul 18
Ripley	Town Hall	Jul 20
Penzance	Acord	Sep 7
Frome	Tree House	Sep 8
Aberdeen	Café Drummond	Sep 18
Silsden	Town Hall	Sep 28
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Dec 4

MR. BIG

Maidstone	Maid Of Stone Festival	Jul 21
Leeds	Academy	Jul 22
Liverpool	Academy	Jul 27
Ebbw Vale	Steelhouse Festival	Jul 28

MONSTER MAGNET

Manchester	The Ritz	Sep 22
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 23
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 24
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 25

MOON SAFARI

London	Tufnell Park Dome	Oct 6

IAN MOSS

Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah	Hut Jul 10
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Jul 12

STEVIE NICKS

Glasgow	Hydro	Jul 6
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jul 9
London	Hyde Park BST	Jul 12

THE OBSESSED, RITUAL KING

Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Aug 19
Swansea	Bunkhouse	Aug 20
Sheffield	Corporation	Aug 21
Glasgow	Audio	Aug 22
Newcastle	University	Aug 23
Leicester	Academy 2	Aug 24
London	Camden Underworld	Aug 25

ORANGE GOBLIN

Dublin	Opium	Oct 4
Belfast	Limelight 2	Oct 5
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Oct 6
Manchester	Gorilla	Oct 8
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 9
Bristol	The Fleece	Oct 10
Southampton	1865	Oct 11
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Oct 12

CASSIDY PARIS

Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Jul 12
Sheffield	Corporation	Jul 13
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jul 18
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Jul 19
Preston	The Ferret	Jul 20
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Jul 23
Huddersfield	Parish	Jul 24
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Jul 25
Ebbw Vale	Steelhouse Festival	Jul 28
Leicester	The Musician	Aug 1

London	Stratford Cart And Horses	Aug 2
Southampton	Suburbia	Aug 3
Hastings	The Carlisle	Aug 6
Wimbledon	The Cavern	Aug 7
Camberley	Login Lounge	Aug 8
Gravesend	Red Lion	Aug 9

PEARL JAM

Dublin	Marlay Park	Jun 22
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jun 25
London	Tottenham Hotspur Stadium	Jun 29

THE PRETENDERS

Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 11
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 12
Oxford	New Theatre	Oct 13
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 16
Gateshead	The Glasshouse	Oct 17
Hull	Connexin Live	Oct 19
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 20
London	Palladium	Oct 22-24
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Oct 26
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 27
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 28

NATHANIEL RATELIFF & THE NIGHT SWEATS

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jun 22
Manchester	Albert Hall	Jun 25
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 26
York	Barbican	Jun 27
Bristol	SWX	Jun 29
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Jun 30

TROY REDFERN

Chester	Live Rooms	Jun 21
Birmingham	Asylum 2	Jun 22
Guildford	Boilerroom	Jun 23
Cambridge	Junction	Jun 24
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Jun 25
London	New Cross Inn	Jun 26
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Jun 27

RHINO'S REVENGE

Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Oct 22-24
London	Putney Half Moon	Oct 27

SEPULTURA, JINJER, OBITUARY, JESUS PIECE

Manchester	Academy	Nov 8
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Nov 9
Belfast	Telegraph Building	Nov 10
Glasgow	Barrowland Ballroom	Nov 11
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 12

PATTI SMITH QUARTET

London	Somerset House	Jun 21
Brighton	Dome	Jun 25

SOIL, (HED)PE, NONPOINT, UNION UNDERGROUND

Bristol	Academy	Nov 5
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 6
Wolverhampton	KK's Steelmill	Nov 8
Manchester	Academy 2	Nov 9
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 10
Glasgow	SWG3	Nov 12
Newcastle	Riverside	Nov 13
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Nov 15
Southampton	1865	Nov 16

MATTHEW EISMAN/GETTY

SPREAD EAGLE, NEW GENERATION SUPERSTARS

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Sep 24
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 25
Manchester	Rebellion	Sep 26
Derby	Queen Vic	Sep 28
Birmingham	Subside	Sep 29
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Oct 2
Bristol	Gryphon	Oct 3
London	Camden Assembly	Oct 4
Crumlin	The Patriot	Oct 5

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN & THE E STREET BAND

London	Wembley Stadium	Jul 25, 27

STATUS QUO

Halifax	Piece Hall	Aug 13
Margate	Dreamland	Aug 15
Taunton	Vivary Park	Aug 23

SYMPHONY X

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Sep 17

GEOFF TATE, KIM JENNETT

Limerick	Dolans	Sep 27
Londonderry	Nerve Centre	Sep 28
Galway	Róisín Dubh	Sep 29
London	Islington Academy	Oct 3
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Oct 4
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 5
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 6
Manchester	Academy 3	Oct 9
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 10
Newcastle	Riverside	Oct 11
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	Oct 12
Dundee	Beat Generator	Oct 15
Glasgow	Cathouse	Oct 18

TEN

Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Jun 30
Manchester	Academy	Jul 13
Cambridge	Portland Arms	Jul 20
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Jul 27
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Aug 17
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Sep 7

TERRORVISION

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Sep 20
Norwich	Epic Studios	Sep 21
Manchester	Academy 2	Sep 22
Leeds	Project House	Sep 24
Bristol	The Fleece	Sep 25
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 26
Stockton-on-Tees	Georgian Theatre	Sep 27
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Sep 28
Glasgow	Slay	Sep 29

TIGERTAILZ

Buckey	Tivoli	Jul 19
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jul 20
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Jul 21
Cardiff	Tramshed	Aug 10

KAVUS TORABI, THE WITCHING TALE

Hastings	The Piper	Aug 5
Reading	Face Bar	Aug 6
Brighton	Komedia	Aug 7
Plymouth	Steel Brew	Aug 9
Frome	Treehouse	Aug 10
Birmingham	Hare And Hounds	Aug 11

WALTER TROUT, LAURA EVANS

Buxton	Opera House	Oct 16
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Oct 17
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Oct 18
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Oct 19
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Oct 22
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Oct 23
Birmingham	Town Hall	Oct 24
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Oct 25

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Bath	Chapel Arts Centre	Sep 4
Southampton	1865	Sep 5
Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Sep 6
Aylesbury	Waterside Theatre	Sep 7
Deal	Astor Theatre	Sep 12
Sudbury	Quay Theatre	Sep 13
Knaresborough	Frazer Theatre	Sep 14
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Sep 19
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Sep 20
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 21
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Sep 26
London	Camden The Forge	Oct 3
Chelmsford	Social Club	Oct 4

TYKETTO, LITTLE CAESAR, DAN BYRNE

London	Islington Academy	Sep 12
Cambridge	Junction	Sep 13
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 14
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Sep 15
Newcastle	Riverside	Sep 17
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 19
Manchester	Academy 2	Sep 20

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 21
Southampton	1865	Sep 22

BONNIE TYLER

London	IndigO2	Jul 25

JUDIE TZUKE

Bury	The Met	Oct 11
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Oct 12
Sunderland	17 Nineteen	Oct 13
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Oct 15
Sheffield	Greystones	Oct 17
Barton	The Ropewalk	Oct 18
Selby	Town Hall	Oct 19
Bath	Chapel Arts	Oct 24
Cardiff	Acapela Studios	Oct 25
Twickenham	The Exchange	Oct 26
Havant	The Spring	Nov 1
Southampton	Hangar Farm	Nov 2
Cobham	St Mary Magdalen	Nov 7
Wokingham	Whitty Theatre	Nov 8
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Nov 9
Melbourne	Assembly Rooms	Nov 15
Tamworth	Boleshill Manor	Nov 16
East Grinstead	Chequer Mead	Nov 21
Hungerford	Croft Hall	Nov 23

WARRIOR SOUL

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jul 10
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Jul 11
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Jul 12
Nottingham	Bootleggers	Jul 13
Coalville	The Victoria	Jul 14
Newcastle	Trillians	Jul 17
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Jul 18
Belfast	Voodoo Lounge	Jul 18

PAUL WELLER

Cheltenham	Centaur	Oct 17
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 18
Brighton	Centre	Oct 19
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 21
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Oct 22
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 24, 25
Dundee	Caird Hall	Oct 27
Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 28, 29
Hull	Connexin Live	Oct 31
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 1
Llandudno	Venue Cymru	Nov 2
Liverpool	Olympia	Nov 4
Bradford	St George's Hall	Nov 5
Oxford	New Theatre	Nov 7
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 8

Y&T

Southampton	The Brook	Oct 22
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 23
London	Islington Academy	Oct 25
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 26
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Oct 27
Glasgow	St Luke's	Oct 30
Newcastle	Northumbria Students Union	Nov 1
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 2

ZEAL & ARDOR

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 22

ZZ TOP, RIVAL SONS, THOSE DAMN CROWS

London	Wembley Arena	Jul 11

Festivals

2000 TREES
THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM, MORE

Cheltenham	Upcote Farm	Jul 10-13

ARCTANGENT FESTIVAL
MOGWAI, IHSAHN, MESHUGGAH, MORE

Bristol	Fernhill Farm	Aug 14-17

BEAUTIFUL DAYS
RICHARD ASHCROFT, TOYAH & ROBERT FRIPP, LEVELLERS, MORE

Devon	Escot Park	Aug 16-18

BLOODSTOCK
OPETH, AMON AMARTH, CLUTCH, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 8-11

CAMBRIDGE FOLK FESTIVAL
ROBERT PLANT & SAVING GRACE, TRANSATLANTIC SESSIONS, FANTASTIC NEGRITO, MORE

Cambridge	Cherry Hinton Hall	Jul 25-28

CARLISLE BLUES ROCK FESTIVAL
THE CINELLI BROTHERS, BRAVE RIVAL, REBECCA DOWNES, MORE

Carlisle	Crown & Mitre Hotel	Oct 11-13

CROPREDY
RICK WAKEMAN, BIG BIG TRAIN, FOCUS, MORE

Oxfordshire	Cropredy	Aug 8-10

ZZ TOP

It's blues, boogie and good-time vibes when the Texan trio come to town. Put on your cheap sunglasses and get down.

London	Wembley Arena	Jul 11

SCOTT DUDELSON/GETTY

FIREFEST
TOUCH, OVERLAND, CONEY HATCH, MORE

Manchester	Academy	Oct 11-13

FIREVOLT
VANDENBERG, GUN, STONE BROKEN, MORE

Stockport	Whitebottom Farm	Aug 9-11

GLASGOW BLUES RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
DOM MARTIN, XANDER & THE PEACE PIRATES, MORE

Glasgow	Oran Mor	Nov 17

HARD ROCK HELL
NASHVILLE PUSSY, LIZZY BORDEN, WEDNESDAY 13, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Nov 7-10

HARD ROCK HELL PROG
PENDRAGON, ARTHUR BROWN, COLOSSEUM, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Nov 14-17

HARD ROCK HELL SLEAZE
HOUSE OF LORDS, SANTA CRUZ, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Sep 6-8

ISLE OF WIGHT
THE DARKNESS, GREEN DAY, THE PRODIGY, MORE

Newport	Seaclose Park	Jun 20-23

LATITUDE
DURAN DURAN, KASABIAN, KEANE, MORE

Suffolk	Henham Park	Jul 25-28

LOOE BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL
DOM MARTIN, GRAINNE DUFFY, MORE

Looe	Tencreek Holiday Resort	Dec 6-8

LOVE LIVE
NAZARETH, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens 28	Feb-Mar 2

LOVE ROCKS
THE ANSWER, THE TREATMENT, SCARLET REBELS, MORE

Dorset	St Leonards Fam	Jun 20-22

MAID OF STONE
MR. BIG, WOLFMOTHER, LIVING COLOUR, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 19-21

MARGATE ROCK FESTIVAL
ORANGE GOBLIN, FLORENCE BLACK, WITCH HAZELL, MORE

Margate	Dreamland	Oct 26

NENE VALLEY ROCK FESTIVAL
NEKTAR, CARAVAN, DARREN WHARTON'S RENEGADE, MORE

Lincolnshire	Grimethorpe Castle	Sep 5-8

A NEW DAY FESTIVAL
HAWKWIND, TANGERINE DREAM, GONG, FOCUS, MORE

Faversham	Mount Ephraim Gardens	Aug 16-18

RADAR
TESSERACT, LEPROUS, THE MIDNIGHT, MORE

Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jul 26-26

READING AND LEEDS FESTIVALS
BLINK 182, LIAM GALLAGHER, THE PRODIGY, MORE

Reading	Little John's Farm	Aug 23-25
Leeds	Braham Park	Aug 23-25

REBELLION
THE STRANGLERS, STIFF LITTLE FINGERS, SHAM 69, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Aug 1-4

S.O.S.
THE HOT DAMN!, FURY, DAN BYRNE, MORE

Oldham	Whittles	Jul 5-7

Recommended

STEELHOUSE
SAXON, THE ALMIGHTY, MR BIG, SKINDRED, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 26-28

STONEDEAD
SAXON, KK'S PRIEST, DORO, ECLIPSE, MORE

Newark	Showground	Aug 24

TOMORROW'S GHOST FESTIVAL
KATATONIA, CREEPER, PETER HOOK & THE LIGHT, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 1, 2

TOWER OF FIRE
NITRATE, ATACK, REMEDY, SARACEN, MORE

Manchester	Rebellion	Jun 29

UK BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL
ARTHUR BROWN, KING KING, CHANTAL McGREGOR, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Jan 31-Feb 2

WEYFEST
MARTIN TURNER, XANDER & THE PEACE PIRATES, NEONFLY, MORE

Tilford	Rural Life Museum	Aug 18-24

WHITBY ROCKS
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Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 8

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DOM MARTIN, BLUE NATION, SELBY, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 9, 10

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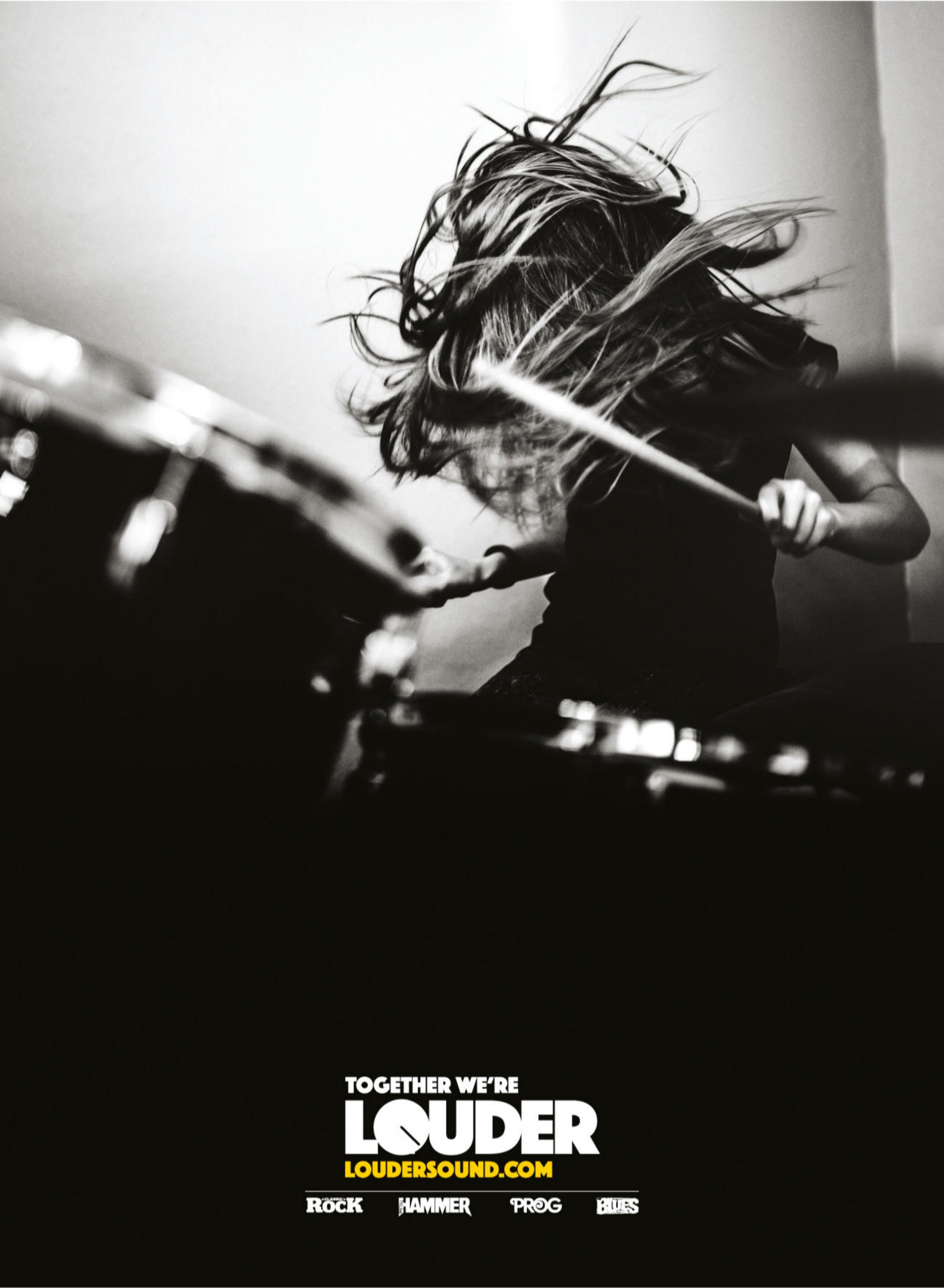
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VV

London Royal Albert Hall

Gothic metal icon turns loose his swan song.

★ If there's any funereal undertone to this final VV show, it's purely aesthetic. Ville Valo is met by a sea of black-clad figures as he arrives on stage at the Royal Albert Hall tonight, but the shrieks of adoration that greet set opener *Neon Noir* suggest more of an Irish wake. Besides, there's still plenty of life to be found in the soaring choruses of *Run Away From The Sun, Wings Of A Butterfly* and *Loveletting*, everyone in the audience joining in with exultant enthusiasm.

In a set that balances HIM hits and the majority of last year's comeback *Neon Noir*, Valo shows just why he's the crown prince of goth-metal, *The Kiss Of Dawn* adding a surprising lustiness to Sabbath-like riffs, while *The Foreverlost* could be a forgotten Cure off-cut. For all the well-worn brilliance of *Buried Alive By Love* or *Killing Loneliness*, it's the *NN* material that feels most transformed, tighter and imbued with a fresh sense of VVitality by the band.

Valo is tight-lipped throughout but a giant grin betrays his enjoyment. Showered with gifts – bouquets, drawings, a fluffy unicorn – the singer's only real interaction comes towards the end of the set. "It's quite something to sing about love and death in middle age," he muses. "Well, let's see what tomorrow brings." More resplendent goth-metal? We wouldn't bet against it.

Rich Hobson

'Valo is tight-lipped throughout but a giant grin betrays his enjoyment.'

VV: showing why he's the crown prince of goth-metal.

JOHN McMURTRIE

The Black Keys

Dublin 3Arena

The Boogie Brothers

★ Though they now sell too many records to play anywhere smaller, The Black Keys – who put in a few days drinking pints around the fair city before the show – manage to transform Dublin's biggest concert hall into a sweaty basement club. There's plenty of the melodies that made them popular, like *Gold On The Ceiling*, during which the audience give it some welly on the *Oh, Oh* hook, a horn section-supported *Beautiful People (Stay High)*, a very groovy *Tighten Up* and a celebratory encore of *Lonely Boy*. There are also a couple of useful Noel Gallagher (he joined them in London a few days after tonight; we weren't so lucky) co-writes from new album *Ohio Players* in potential hits *Only Love Matters* and a very Oasis-like *On The Game*.

All of which is all well and good, but where The Black Keys – dressed for the most part like they'd just finished a shift on an Ohio assembly line because they mean business – really deliver is in the wild punk blues department. *I Got Mine, Have Love Will Travel* and *Next Girl* are all furious, with Dan Auerbach attempting to strangle his various guitars and make his amps howl, and Patrick Carney attacking his drums like they just tried to drag him into an alley.

Success hasn't filed The Black Keys' edges off, which is a very good thing.

Pat Carty

Gary Numan

Glasgow O2 Academy

Evidently forever in electric dreams.

★ Gary Numan's rock and metal credentials are well documented, and his pioneering electronic influence casts a long shadow over the industrial end moraine of rock. Indeed, he's fresh off a 29-date US tour with Ministry. So while his backing band – the guitarists bearing an uncanny resemblance to The Gentlemen from *Buffy* – are well oiled, it's debatable whether Numan's voice is at full strength. But tonight he's plagued by poor sound – the mix quality is not exactly Dolby Atmos, and the vocals are occasionally lost like tears in the rain. Microphone trouble mars opener *Replicas*, but *Me! I Disconnect From You* explodes like a Reaper drone and we're off to the replicant races.

The notoriously shy and reticent Numan mimes his appreciation but never interacts with the audience. His original motionless android stage persona was wrought by anxiety over how to present himself. Not so much now. When he has his guitar strapped on, he transforms with Slash-style guitar-god poses, and when not he prowls the stage, giving it the full Dave Gahan flick-'n'-thrust voguing.

The Ballardian electro-goth of *Down In The Park* precedes a climax of meaty riffs in *The Machman* and *Metal* before the inevitable encore of *Cars* and *Are 'Friends' Electric?* And if any of the rapturous Glaswegian Numanoids feel short-changed by the sound quality, then they're not showing it.

Alex Burrows

Eric Clapton

Dublin 3Arena

Slowhand still smoking.

★ Is God still in the house? He was markedly absent the last time I saw Eric Clapton play in this venue, but tonight he makes several welcome appearances. Perhaps it's guesting local hero Paul Brady, who comes out for the acoustic set, during which he sings his own lovely *Harvest Time*, or perhaps it's Clapton's crack band, in the pocket from the get-go, with particular kudos going to Doyle Bramhall II on guitar who gives his boss a very good run for his money, but Clapton is pushing himself.

Wisely, for the most part, sticking to covers – his worthy but wearing *Prayer Of A Child* exposes his songwriting shortcomings – we get a soulful *Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out*, a Robert Johnson double play with a JJCale-ish delivery of *Crossroads* and a marvellous *Little Queen Of Spades*, and an especially groovy version of Cale's *Cocaine* to finish the main set.

The highlights are when Clapton steps on his wah-wah pedal in the middle of Blind Faith/Steve Winwood's *Presence Of The Lord*, a rather good run at Cream's *Badge*, and from his *Layla* era a positively explosive *Got To Get Better In A Little While*. There's no sign of the song *Layla* itself, despite plenty of punters roaring for it, but Clapton surprises at least one sceptical reviewer by proving that his fire is still burning.

Pat Carty

'The Black Crowes are on it the moment they take the stage.'

Steven Tyler joins the Crowes for a full-blooded delivey of Aerosmith's *Mama Kin*.

The Black Crowes / Jim Jones All Stars

London Hammersmith Eventim Apollo

A rock'n'roll master class shakes the capital to its core.

Just under 33 years ago, Jim Jones, then frontman with garage testifiers Thee Hypnotics, learned a valuable lesson from The Black Crowes. Having secured the support for the UK leg of the Crowes' *Shake Your Money Maker* tour after Chris Robinson fell for their charms while reportedly tripping to their debut album *Come Down Heavy*, they soon found out which was the vital corner of the sex and drugs and rock'n'roll triangle.

"They'd be: 'You're on at eight-thirty p.m. and you've got forty-five-minutes,'" Jones tells *Classic Rock*. "The first night, we played over our allotted time, so they were like: 'If you can't do it in forty-five minutes…' So they cut our time. We learned that this was a proper tour: the show goes on; people have paid their money; the main band takes the stage on time and everything leads up to that."

Although that remains a truism, tonight the opening set from the nine-piece Jim Jones All Stars is no mere buttering up of The Black Crowes, but a coruscating display of ramalama delivered on its own uncompromising terms. While Thee Hypnotics blazed their trail and The Jim Jones Revue dealt in demented savagery, Jim Jones All Stars are arguably the frontman's most incendiary and satisfying incarnation yet. As an alchemist, Jones knows how to mix the medicine, shaking up rock'n'roll with blues, soul and jazz, and the well-drilled All Stars power through a nine-song set that nods to the singer's past (*Cement Mixer*) while revelling in his present. The funk at the heart of *Gimme The Grease* grooves hard, while the three-saxophone attack at the heart of their reading of Jimmy Castor Bunch's *Troglodyte* blows sheets of avant-noise as Jones shimmies across the stage, simultaneously exhorting the audience and marshalling his band. A fervent performance that's soulful, filthy, loud, beautiful and nasty, Jim Jones All Stars chalk up a major victory along with the new converts.

Jim Jones: knows how to mix the medicine.

Similarly, The Black Crowes' lynchpins Chris and Rich Robinson have gone through plenty of learning of their own, primarily how to stay in the same room without killing each other. As lessons go, their realisation that working in tandem instead of against each other has yielded extraordinary dividends in the shape of *Happiness Bastards*, an album so damn urgent, direct and just plain fun that it defies the conventional wisdom that bands of their vintage will never match the excitement and vitality of their younger selves. What's satisfying to note is that The Black Crowes can still transfer that energy from the studio to the stage with an enthusiasm and joy that's utterly infectious; they don't just play the songs, they put on a hell of a show.

The stage set reflects their rock'n'roll circus: a banner bearing the name of their new album is draped from one side of the stage to the other, while four large crenelated drapes flank the assembled musicians to create an environment that's part big top, part revivalist tent. The stacks of vintage Marshall, Vox, Fender and Orange amps and speaker cabinets piled up behind the hirsute

JIM JONES ALL STARS: BRAD MERRETT

With Chris Robinson the ringmaster, the Black Crowes put on a hell of a show.

frontline of guitarists Rich Robinson and Nico Bereciartua and bassist Sven Pipien are rock'n'roll porn in excelsis. Behind them on a ridiculously high raised platform is drummer Cully Symington, with keyboard player Erik Deutsch and backing singers Mackenzie Adams and Lesley Grant on either side of him. And there, in the eye of this sonic hurricane and in front of a giant dressing-room mirror, is ringmaster Chris Robinson.

The Black Crowes are on it the moment they take the stage and the opening one-two of *Bedside Manners* and the Stooges-infused *Rats And Clowns* is delivered with all the verve and precision they deserve. Lesser bands with lesser contemporary material would either baulk at the sheer chutzpah of presenting new songs this early, or simply use those introductory numbers for the benefit of adjusting the sound balance before hitting the crowd pleasers. But here an agenda is clearly being set: this isn't going to be perfunctory run-through of established gems embellished by cursory nods to the latest contract filler, but an affirmation of a band reaching and touching the lofty standards they themselves had set. Where previous latter-day sets found The Black Crowes bloating on the carbohydrates of endless guitar solos, tonight the serving is of a protein-packed party that's lean and flab-free. Witness the muscular flexing of *Wanting And Waiting* that sweats bullets.

Chris Robinson's exuberance is infectious throughout. Strutting and preening in his red suit, his left hand frequently on his waist as his right leg taps the beat like an eager pony at a horse trial, his voice moves from the throaty rasps of *Twice As Hard* to the tenderness of *Thorn In My Pride* with consummate ease. Beside him, Rich Robinson hits hard with each push and pull of *Jealous Again*'s grind, and the glances of admiration between the brothers during galloping covers of the Velvet Underground's *White Light/White Heat* and Otis Redding's *Hard To Handle* are touching. As is the appearance of Aerosmith singer Steven Tyler, for his first public performance since last September when vocal cord damage knocked him out of commission. Belying his 76 years with a full-blooded and physical encore of *Mama Kin*, he looks to a grinning Jimmy Page who stands just off stage as if willing the guitarist to join him, but it never happens. Then again, with an evening as high-octane as this, it really doesn't have to.

After the show, Jim Jones later ruminates on coming full circle with The Black Crowes after three decades: "As much as you think that shooting up and having a Jack 'n' Coke while wearing a Keith Richards headband is rock'n'roll, this was the real rock'n'roll – you deliver a killer fucking show for the crowd."

He's not wrong, and tonight was a double shot of the neat and undiluted stuff from two bands schooled in the wisdom of experience and a love of arse-shaking music. Bottoms up!

Words: ***Julian Marszalek*** *Photos:* ***Ross Halfin***

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Jane's Addiction

London Bush Hall

The classic line-up's first show in 14 years is a pre-tour warm-up.

★ The last time Jane's Addiction's classic line-up performed together, the iPad was yet to be launched and austerity was something practised by monks, so the moment of disbelief that greets their entrance in the snug environs of this 400-capacity venue is understandable. With the reality of the situation sinking in, the monstrous rhythm section of topless drummer Stephen Perkins and hulking bassist Eric Avery lock into the incrementally rising groove of *Kettle Whistle* as Dave Navarro, back from battling long covid, coaxes gentle chimes from his guitar.

While singer Perry Farrell at first seems uncharacteristically subdued, with a series of poses that see him resembling a life-drawing mannequin, all around him is a band that soon shake off the dust and crank up the noise. The one-two of *Ain't No Right* and *Whores* sees them catching their wave, and Perkins is frequently off of his drum stool flexing his muscles and exhorting the audience.

While new song *Imminent Redemption* – making its global debut – doesn't fall far from the tree, it's certainly no disgrace either. Understandably, the material from *Nothing's Shocking* and *Ritual Do Lo Habitual* is what hits hardest; *Been Caught Stealing* parties like it's 1990 all over again, and *Ocean Size* swells and moves with the tides.

"Happy?" Farrell asks, and the returning roar welcomes their return.

Julian Marszalek

'The band soon shake off the dust and crank up the noise.'

Jane's Addiction: hitting hardest with material from *Nothing's Shocking* and *Ritual Do Lo Habitual*.

Nickelback

Birmingham Utilita Arena

The hit machine rolls on with Canadian rockers' first UK tour in six years.

★ A lot has changed for Nickelback over the past 20 years. 2005's *All The Right Reasons* proved the band had a capacity for hits that could transcend the rock consciousness and consistently pack out arenas. Even if Get Rollin' wasn't their first UK tour in six years, every date would likely still have sold out regardless, because at this point Nickelback aren't just a band, they're Big Rock Stars selling the dream of a Big Rock Show, jumbo screens, T-shirt cannons and all.

The chugging riffs of opener *San Quentin* might harken to the metal-adjacent heft of earlier material, but it's a passing notion. An acoustic guitar is brought out for follow-ups *Savin' Me* and *Far Away*, and the volume in the arena is ratcheted up 10-fold. "We want to sing along with every one of you tonight," Chad Kroeger says, and sure enough the set leans towards ubiquitous balladry. Faster songs – *Animals, Where Do I Hide* – are met with patient indulgence, the audience seemingly just waiting for the next big hit.

But as 16,000 people passionately sing along to *Rock Star* and *How You Remind Me*, the shift away from their pyro-blasting, Pantera-covering past never seemed more immaterial. Nickelback still deliver one of the biggest, most crowd-pleasing rock shows on the planet, their ascension to stadiums is surely long-overdue.

Rich Hobson

BRAD MERRETT

Rod Stewart

Dublin Royal Hospital Kilmainham

In Rod we trust.

★ It takes a well-seasoned pro to make an outdoor show work when serious rain is falling, but Rod Stewart is just that sort of chap. Walking on stage pushing a mop, wearing a leopardskin-print jacket over drainpipe trousers that would make The Strokes jealous, he worked hard to make a field full of Dubliners forget the damp.

Yes, *Forever Young*, with its dodgy *Riverdance* section, and *Passion* are as ropey as a sailor's shed, but he dispatches those early in the set so we can sing along in the rain to *Maggie May* and throw shapes of the arse-out, chicken strutting variety during *Hot Legs*.

There are touching nods to Christine McVie (*I'd Rather Go Blind*) and Jeff Beck (a marvellous *People Get Ready*), as well as more than one mention of his beloved Celtic football club who put Stewart in very good form by winning the Scottish Cup Final the day before. His own strike rate is equally trophy worthy as he knocks *Baby Jane*, a superb *I Don't Wanna Talk About It* and a joyous *You're In My Heart* into the back of the net.

Determined to not let the weather "spoil our fun", he gives it everything. By the time he puts the cap on for *Sailing* we are all howling along, blissfully ignoring the irony of lyrics about '*stormy waters*'.

Da Ya Think I'm Sexy? Yes we do.

Pat Carty

Powder Chutes

Dunedin Crown Hotel, NZ

Genuinely teenaged Kiwis rock historic New Zealand pub.

★ For one night only, Dunedin's historic Crown Hotel is not the home of the spiky indie types whose posters adorn its walls, but of Powder Chutes, a rock band with a capital 'R', whose 2023 single *Moths To The Fame* turned heads across the globe. With a freshly recorded album in the bag, they take to the stage with the relaxed confidence of youth (the band's cumulative age is a decade short of Mick Jagger's) and provide solid evidence of why they're bound for bigger venues.

The star is guitarist Clarke West, a startlingly adept musician who plays with the nonchalance of someone who completed their 10,000 hours while still at school (he's just left), with rock-solid support from bassist Otis Murphy and drummer Archie Orbell. And if frontman Henry McConnell's voice occasionally sounds a bit boyish, well, there's a reason for that. *Moth* arrives early, with its snaking riffs and juddering rhythms, but it's not the only highlight. *Take It Or Leave It* swaggers its way to a giddy climax, and the unnamed songs from the album sound fully formed. It's kinda grunge by way of John Frusciante, Joe Perry and Tom Morello, and the closing cover of RATM's *Killing In The Name*, played as the audience ricochets around the room, would normally be deemed unnecessary were it not rendered so perfectly.

Fraser Lewry

The Soundtrack Of My Life

Broadcasting legend ***'Whispering' Bob Harris*** on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to him.

Interview: **Jo Kendall**

He was championed by John Peel on BBC Radio 1. Then in 1972 he became the 'Whispering' presenter of TV music show *The Old Grey Whistle Test*. Now Bob Harris is celebrating 25 years fronting the BBC's *Country* show, as well as turning 78, all while on tour with an event co-hosted by Colin Hall, based on Hall's book and documentary series *The Songs The Beatles Gave Away*.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

That would be my mum and dad's record collection in the early fifties, pre-rock'n'roll, so Mantovani – a great favourite of mine – Johnny Mathis and Perry Como. We had a radiogram in the corner of the room, and when it was switched on it glowed like a warm fire. My mum listened to the radio all the time. That would be formative in terms of what I'm doing now.

THE FIRST SONG I BROADCAST

I was sitting in for John Peel on BBC Radio 1 on August 19, 1970. I had a brilliant producer called Jeff Griffin, who said to me: "You bring in the music, I'll teach you how to build a programme." I learned so much from him, he was so skilful. Our first choice was *Cinnamon Girl* by Neil Young, because I just loved it.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

I've been so lucky to hear important records arrive in real time. *Sgt Pepper* was an absolute game changer. There were some experimental groups at the time, such as Pink Floyd or Soft Machine, but what The Beatles and George Martin did with *Sgt Pepper* was bring every thread of creative energy together to push out the boundaries as far as technology would let them go. Twelve months later, in pop music and the industry, everything was different.

THE SINGER

Ben E King. He was with The Drifters, a genuinely groundbreaking black band who started as R&B/doo-wop, then were steered into the charts in a very creative way by their label, Atlantic. *There Goes My Baby* [1959] had an incredible new sound that was a combination of orchestration and atmosphere, all bound together by King's voice.

THE GUITAR HERO

Jimmy Page. He drove probably the greatest rock band that ever lived. I was fortunate to spend time touring with them in the States, and it was incredible to watch his artistry.

THE SONGWRITER

Country artist Lori McKenna. She's not a commercial writer, but it just so happens that a lot of her songs have been huge hits. One song of great warmth, which we need so much of these days, is *Humble And Kind*, a sentiment that sums Lori up. She's become established as one of the top writers in Nashville.

THE BEST LIVE BAND OR ARTIST I'VE EVER SEEN

That's easy: Bruce Springsteen. I saw him at his first big showcase at the Roxy in Los Angeles in 1975, where everyone was there – George Harrison, David Bowie and some tennis stars such as Jimmy Connors. Then I saw him in New Haven in 1978, a four-hour show that we recorded for *Whistle Test*. This was the best show I have ever seen for performance, energy, and the electricity of Springsteen when he was down in the audience. Afterwards he took us to a place nearby and got up on stage with the band and jammed until two a.m.!

MY GUILTY PLEASURE

I love this record, it's absolutely gorgeous – *Move Over Darling* by Doris Day. It's in no way a comment on my private life [laughs].

MY MOST UNDERRATED ACT

There's a lovely country artist from Northern Ireland called Catherine McGrath. She put a wonderful album out, *Talk Of This Town*, in 2018, which got to Number One in the Country chart.

THE BEST RECORD THAT I'VE APPEARED ON

David Bowie's *Memories Of A Free Festival* [1969]. It wasn't all hash and incense, though [laughs]. It was done in the early evening in Trident studio in London. I was there with my first wife, Sue, Marc Bolan and his first wife June, and David and Tony Visconti. We were sat on the floor singing: *'The sun machine is coming down, and we're gonna have a party'*. It was a lot of fun to do, and to hear back.

MY SATURDAY NIGHT PARTY RECORD

Anything by Blackberry Smoke. I love them. They're the Status Quo of country!

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

I'll pick something where the beauty of it makes me cry, not because it's sad: Lukas Nelson & The Promise Of The Real, *Just Outside Of Austin*. It's an appreciation of love and nature, and it has a connection, for me, with someone I care about. It became our song.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

Ben E King again, and *Stand By Me*. It's a song about getting through things, we're all in this together. I'm an ambassador for Help Musicians, and during the pandemic, artists such as Roseanne Cash, Peter Frampton, Rick Wakeman and more became the Whispering Bob All-Stars, recording this as a fundraising track. It's still raising money for musicians now.

Bob Harris and Colin Hall are currently touring The Songs The Beatles Gave Away. Hall's book of the same name is out now. More details at bobharris.org

"Springsteen in 1978 was the best show I've ever seen for performance and energy."

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN: ALAN TANNENBAUM/GETTY

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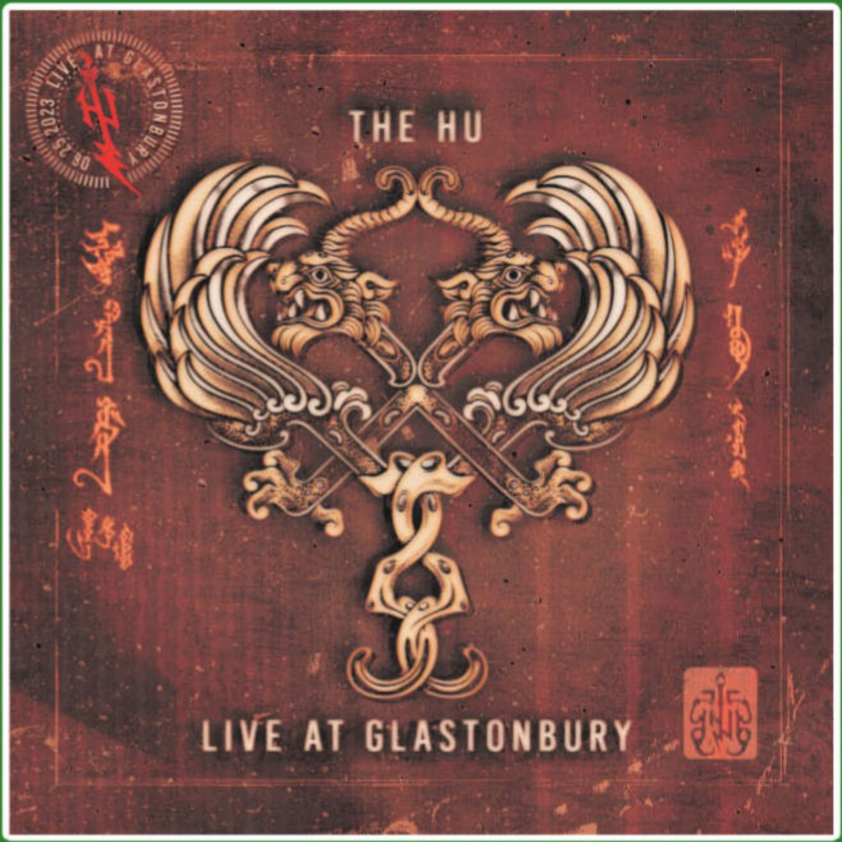

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